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IN SCRUB-UP-LAND

OLIVE ROBERTS BARTON

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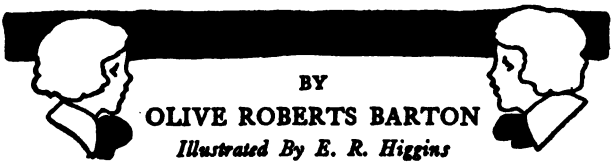

BY

OLIVE ROBERTS BARTON

Illustrated By E. R. Higgins

NANCY AND NICK

IN SCRUB-UP-LAND

IN THE LAND-OF-DEAR-KNOWS-WHERE

IN HELTER-SKELTER-LAND

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IT WAS NOW SCRAMBLE SQUIRREL'S TURN TO GET SPRING-CLEANED

NANCY AND NICK
IN
SCRUB-UP-LAND

BY

OLIVE ROBERTS BARTON

ILLUSTRATED BY
E. R. HIGGINS

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NANCY AND NICK IN SCRUB-UP-LAND

THE FIRST THING THEY SAW WAS A PLUMP MUSHROOM.

CHAPTER I: THE MAGICAL MUSHROOM

It was strange that a mushroom should grow so very early in the spring. When the sun was still nosing out patches of hidden snow from behind stones and tree-trunks; when the buds on the early shrubs were so tiny they looked like clouds of pale mist; and when the little wood-flowers were thrusting up timid green fingers, before baring their pretty faces to the sharp March winds. Yet, when Nancy and Nick had finished their breakfast one morning and rushed down to their old playground under the chest-

nut tree in the meadow, that was the first thing they saw—a large, plump, round mushroom with a lovely pale pink lining to his hat.

"Hello!" cried Nick, dropping onto his knees beside him. "How did you get here?"

"That's what I'd like to know," answered the Mushroom, in dismay. "I've made a dreadful mistake, some way, and I'm trying to think how I did it. Goodness, but it's chilly!" And he shivered as well as a mushroom can.

Nancy didn't know much about seasons nor growing things, or she wouldn't have asked, "Don't you like our meadow, Mr. Mushroom? And if you're cold, why don't you wear some clothes like the other flowers do?"

The Mushroom laughed at this. "Thank you, little lady, for the compliment. That's the very first time I've ever been called a flower." And he bowed grandly, tipping his pink-lined hat like a duke. "No, I don't usually need many clothes, they're such a bother, besides I never go where it's so very cold. At least I never did before." And he shivered again. "As for liking your meadow—I have two good reasons for *not* wish-

ing to be here. First, because I'm sure to get stepped on if you let your cows out, and second, because I'm very much needed somewhere else."

"Where?" cried the twins together, curiously. Oh, haven't I said they were twins? They were, of course, and being such, were twice as curious as any one child could possibly be.

"At this minute," answered the Mushroom thoughtfully, "Mr. Rubadub is probably getting cross as jackstraws watching for me."

"Who's Mr. Rubadub?"

"Don't you know?" exclaimed the Mushroom, surprised. "Mr. Rubadub of Scrub-Up-Land!"

"My!" cried Nick. "Where's that?" And Nancy exclaimed, "My! Who's that?" So the poor Mushroom didn't know which one to answer first.

"I'll answer you both," he decided at last, "if you'll do something for me. Break me off near to the ground and pick me up, will you, please?"

"Of course!" said Nancy, obligingly, doing so at once, quite carefully. "Now, Mr. Mushroom!"

"Do I look like a fairy?" he began.

"I should say not," declared Nick. And

Nancy was so surprised that she nearly let the Mushroom fall off her lap.

"Well, I am!" he stated proudly. "I'm one of the helpers to the Fairy Queen, and I'm on my way with a message for Rubadub who is in charge of one of the Fairy Queen's Nine Hundred and Ninety-Nine Kingdoms, called Scrub-Up-Land. He gets all the birds and insects and animals and flowers ready for the Land-Where-Spring-Is-Coming and I tell you it's a job! I'm sorry I've got bad news for him."

"Bad news!" repeated Nick. "Is somebody sick?"

"No, indeed, unless Mr. Rubadub gets sick when he hears it. He sent for help, and I've got to take him the pleasant news that there isn't any to be had. The fairy helpers are all as busy as ants in a honey-pot, and poor Rubadub hasn't a soul."

"Can't *you* help him?" queried Nancy.

The Mushroom sighed. "Only by giving good advice," he answered sadly. "I'm magical, but my work consists chiefly in helping people and animals to understand each other. If I weren't

magical, my dears, how else do you suppose you could understand what I say? Did you ever hear a Mushroom talk before?"

The children admitted that they hadn't.

"GOOD MORNING, CHILDREN," SAID THE MUSHROOM. "I'M GLAD YOU CAME SO EARLY."

Suddenly an idea popped into Nick's head. "Couldn't *we* go, Mr. Mushroom? Couldn't Nancy and I go to help Mr. Rubadub?"

"For goodness sake!" exclaimed their new friend in surprise. "I never thought of such a thing! The idea fairly makes me dizzy! Quite dizzy! Yet, why not? Mr. Rubadub needs help,

spring's coming fast, and he hasn't got the first robin ready yet. You're willing, and if the Fairy Queen's willing, it's as simple as X. Y. Z. I'll find out and let you know by to-morrow, kiddies. If it's all right I'll bring the Green Shoes along. They'll take you *any place* in Fairyland. Put me down now, Nancy, and run along home and meet me here to-morrow."

Quite excited, the children laid their new friend carefully behind a stone, then scampered back to the house, wondering what the Fairy Queen would say to their plan and never thinking, for some queer reason, of asking Mother for her consent at all!

The next morning bright and early, they were back under the tree searching eagerly for their little acquaintance of yesterday. Sure enough, there he was behind the stone where they had left him, just as though he had never been away! But what was that beside him, looking for all the world like some very bright green plants just sprung through the earth? Shoes! The dearest, oddest, queerest, cunningest shoes you can imagine! The twins danced for joy.

"What did the Fairy Queen say?" cried Nancy excitedly.

"Can't you see for yourselves?" nodded the Mushroom.

"Then we may go!" exclaimed Nick, joyfully picking up one of the little Green Shoes in his hand, and slipping off his old one.

"We're all going!" smiled the Magical Mushroom. "And so that I can't get lost again, I've got a pair of legs of my own! Try the shoes now, children; try 'em on quick, for time's flying fast. And if they fit, we'll be off by the Green Shoe Express right away. I'll not take time now to tell you all the things those shoes can do, for if I did, it would be the day after next Friday before we got there, but I'll tell you all about them on the way."

The twins were stamping around at a great rate by this time, for the little shoes just fitted and were on at a touch, and when the Mushroom called, "All ready?" they answered with a shout.

"All right," commanded the Fairy. "Take

hands, everybody! Now, Green Shoes, to Scrub-Up-Land, if you please!"

A quick lifting, a faint fanning of the breeze in their faces (not the blustery March wind, at all) and the twins and the Magical Mushroom were on their way to Rubadub's domain—a far, far corner of Fairyland.

THEY DECIDED THAT THEY WERE GOING TO HAVE A MOST BEAUTIFUL TIME.

CHAPTER II: THE TWINS MEET RUBADUB

WHEN the Green Shoes set Nancy and Nick down gently before a queer little gate, still holding tightly to the Magical Mushroom's hands (for, bless you, when the Fairy Queen gave him legs, she gave him arms, too!), it seemed as though they were waking after a beautiful dream. The trip through the air was like a sail in a wonderful boat on a gently waving ocean, and a ride in a swift airplane all rolled into one. They decided at once that if Scrub-Up-Land were half so pleasant as the road to it, they were

going to have a most beautiful time. But what was that? Through the queer little gate were coming noises that sounded like anything but Fairyland. Owls were screeching, squirrels were chippering, frogs were croaking, and birds were chattering, as though pandemonium were let loose. Yes, and not only the birds and animals were trying to make themselves heard, but other tiny voices were piping up above the din.

"Yes, Mr. Rubadub," one of them was saying, "but folks in the Land-Where-Spring-Is-Coming always look for me first. The minute they see a snow-drop they smile and nod and say, 'Yes, spring has come at last.' The flowers, too!"

The Magical Mushroom nodded. "Didn't I tell you so, children? Didn't I say so? Poor Mr. Rubadub must be nearly at his wits' end with every one demanding his attention at once. We'd better go in right away and get busy."

There wasn't a bit of use knocking in all that din, besides, manners were as scarce as plums in a potato-field—nobody seemed to think of them. Even the robin seemed to have lost all shame, for

he was screaming, "Me first, Mr. Rubadub, me first! Remember what you promised! Me first!" You'd never have thought he could be the dignified, sedate creature who walks over your lawn in a brilliant red waistcoat and sleek brown jacket, looking as though butter wouldn't melt in his mouth, or a juicy worm slide down his throat. No, when Mr. Redbreast forgets to be polite, things are in a bad way; so the twins walked right in.

What a sight met their eyes! In the midst of a crowd of all the forest and meadow and garden folk, stood the forlornest fairyman you ever saw, or if you never saw one, the forlornest one you can imagine. Even his wings hung dejectedly, and his little, peering, though kindly eyes, looked as though they'd never smile again. His very nose, which was long and sharp, and not at all beautiful, but which most times would have given him a distinguished air, seemed to have lost its sauciness and hung limberly.

He looked helplessly about him in a dazed sort of way, his hedge-hog scrubbing brush in one hand, in the other a squirrel-tail paint-brush

dripping bright green paint; but both brushes were having a vacation at present, until the poor fairyman could get some order into his unruly customers and get to work again.

"Hey there!" he was calling to the pussy-willow which was shoving the snow-drop out of the way. "If you don't stop your fussing I'll never get through. My goodness! It will be the Fourth of July before I get the first birds ready at this rate, and people will wonder what's wrong with Scrub-Up-Land. Now do be good. One at a time, please."

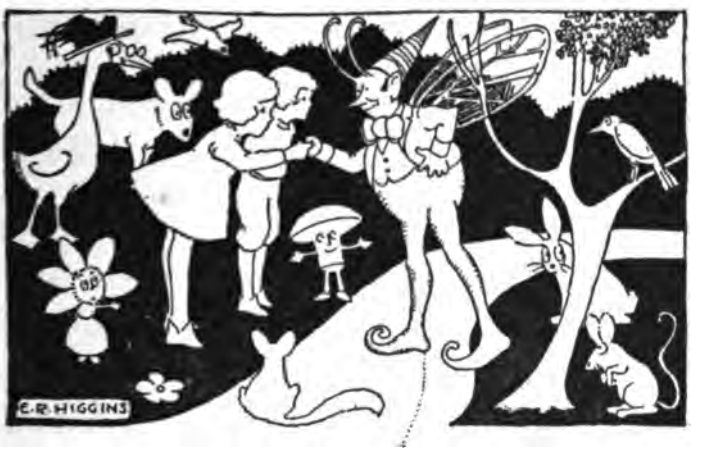
Just then he saw the twins and the Magical Mushroom, and his face brightened wonderfully. Over he came right away, the best he could with so many creatures hanging onto his coat-tails.

"How d' do, folks," said he, dropping his brushes and holding out both hands. "I'm mighty glad to see you. I suppose you saw my advertisement in the *'Gossamer Gazette.'*"

"No," answered Nick truthfully. "We didn't. Is that a newspaper?"

Rubadub's smile faded. "Yes," said he in a disappointed tone. "I need help, so I put in a

notice, hoping some one would see it. In fact, when I saw you, I was sure my plan had worked. Either that, or else when I waved my wand this morning and made a wish, the Fairy Queen



"HOW D' DO, FOLKS," SAID RUBADUB.

heard it and sent you in answer. But the old thing must be worn out, I reckon." And he sighed dismally.

But Nancy comforted him at once. "Don't you worry, Mr. Rubadub!" she said brightly. "We *are* helpers, and your wand can't be worn out at all." And then she told him all about the

Magical Mushroom losing his way and happening along in the meadow at the very minute they ran out to play.

Rubadub's smile came back. "Why, I declare!" he exclaimed. "Isn't this lovely, my dears! Was it at seventeen and three-quarter ticks past mid-morning?"

The twins weren't sure.

"Because if it was," he went on, "that's the precise time at which I waved my wand. I remember, because when I had finished waving it, I looked at my sun-flower clock and it was eighteen ticks after. I'll take excellent care of that good old stick after this, if that's what it can do. Can you paint, children?"

"Yes," answered Nancy with pride. "I've filled up all the O's and A's in 'The Adventures of 'Lizabeth Anne,' and Nick painted the cat's tail pink once."

"Well, well! That's what I call luck," cried their new host. "Helpers who can really paint, only——" he added gravely, "we don't put pink tails on things unless they belong there, and"—meaningly, with a glance at the robin and cat-

birds—"the only O's we need to fill are the mouths of noisy folks who won't wait their turn."

This quieted the racket for a moment or two, and Rubadub had a chance to say:

"I keep a big picture-book of birds and animals; all the flowers, too, and if you follow it when you're fixing the creatures up, you can't go wrong. Just come along with me, please."

Rubadub turned and went along a crooked path, all the creatures crowding close and screaming again that they wanted to get spring-cleaned, Nancy and Nick and the Magical Mushroom trooping after.

They turned a corner in a few minutes and the fairyman pointed to a group of buildings. "There are my workshops," he explained, "paint-shop, store-room, barber-shop and laundry. Everything for everybody, and you've no idea how dirty and shabby some of these fellows get, off in their Dreamland Home during the winter months."

The children gazed in open-mouthed wonder at everything they saw, and as they drew nearer they thought of a poem in one of their books:

"A house is built of bricks and things,
A ship's made up of sheets and strings
A train's got iron, and wood, and glass
Through which the people gaze that pass,
At bridges, cities, walls and towers.
What a lot of things in this world of ours!"

There seemed to be a little of everything in Scrub-Up-Land.

"PLEASE DON'T GET SOAP INTO MY EYES," BEGGED ROBIN REDBREAST.

CHAPTER III: ROBIN GETS SPRING-CLEANED

EVERYBODY started to work with a will after the arrival of the twins. Mr. Rubadub set up his "Bird Book" and "Flower Book" where the twins could see them, and brought out all his paint pots and brushes. The animals he attended to himself, because, as he said, not a mother's son of them liked soap and water, and they generally got peevish when he scrubbed around their ears. "Particularly!" said he, "the March Hare. He's got such big ears to clean. He's gone, thank goodness! I suppose he's cut-

ting up high-jinks in the Land-Where-Spring-Is-Coming and forgetting his manners entirely. But I hope he doesn't do like that lazy, fat, old rascal Wally Woodchuck, or, as I suppose you've heard him called, Grubby Groundhog. He's got two names, you know, and some day I'll tell you why. But, anyway, I sent Wally out one day in February when it was cold enough to freeze the sun, just because he coaxed and coaxed until I had to. And *what,* my dears, do you s'pose he did! Saw his shadow, and just because he thought that was bad luck, he crept into his hole again and went back to Dreamland, and when he crawled out again last week, he came back to get spring-cleaned all over again, and didn't I have to launder him from heel to head."

Just then Robin Redbreast flew up onto Nancy's shoulder, pointing to page one in the "Bird-Book." "I told you so!" he insisted. "Don't you see that my picture comes first, which shows that spring can't really come until I arrive? Please fix me now, won't you? Just a little brown paint on my jacket, a touch of yellow on

my bill and a dab of red on my waistcoat and I'm finished. My goodness! What are you going to do with that tub of water and soap-suds?"

"Give you a bath!" laughed Nancy, reaching up for him, before he could fly away. "It isn't nice to put on new clothes before you wash. And you're as dusty as a miller, Robin, grubbing for worms down South. If I painted you on top of all that dust, when the first April shower came along, you'd run, like my gingham dresses do in the wash sometimes. And folks would think you were some strange variety. 'What's this?' they'd say, 'that the people down South have sent us this year, instead of a robin?' How'd you like that?"

Robin hung his head. "I suppose you're right," he said. "Well, go ahead, only please don't get soap up my bill or into my eyes, will you? And as for my ears, they aren't dirty at all, being away down under my feathers."

Nancy patted him. "Dear old robin, I'll not hurt you. Don't be afraid——"

And in no time at all, she had Robin Redbreast the gayest of birds, his waistcoat a brave

red, his coat shining like new brown satin, and his bill as yellow as a daffodil. He was quite a dandy, I assure you, and I'm afraid he began to strut a bit as people are apt to do when they are well-dressed.

He ran over his trills then, up the scale and down, practicing his evening song and his rainy-day song, his nest-building song, and the song by which he wakened the babies in the morning.

Then away he flew out of the gate of Scrub-Up-Land to the Land-Where-Spring-Was-Coming, with a gay "Chirrup."

"Good-by," called the twins and the Magical Mushroom, while Rubadub stood with his hands on his hips, shaking his head. "I hope he gets there all right," he said, "and that that old rascal Jack Frost doesn't chase him. But he's such a sly fox, you can't tell when he'll come popping out."

Now, while Nancy had been spring-cleaning Robin Redbreast, Nick had been busy brushing up the katkins for the pussy-willows. Rubadub had showed him where he kept pieces of fur to

patch up the worn places on the old ones, and also to make nice new ones.

"Here you are, Mr. Rubadub," he called, holding up a great basket. "What shall I do with them?"

A SWARM OF LOVELY FAIRIES APPEARED.

Rubadub scratched his ear thoughtfully. "If only we had some more helpers," he said, "we could send them off right away to stick the buds on the bare branches. Then wouldn't folks be tickled to see Robin Redbreast and the pussy-willows at the same time. They'd say, 'My, isn't Rubadub smart this year! And how nice of him

to give us an early season! He must have excellent help.' You and Nancy and the Magical Mushroom could paste on the willows, but I haven't the right kind of glue here, or the shiny varnish to put on the branches. It would never do to stick lovely, soft, clean, little katkins on old dead-looking branches. They must be varnished first!"

Scarcely had the fairyman ceased speaking when there was a tremendous buzzing overhead, and wasn't it queer, but a whole swarm of lovely little fairies with wings settled on the bushes about them.

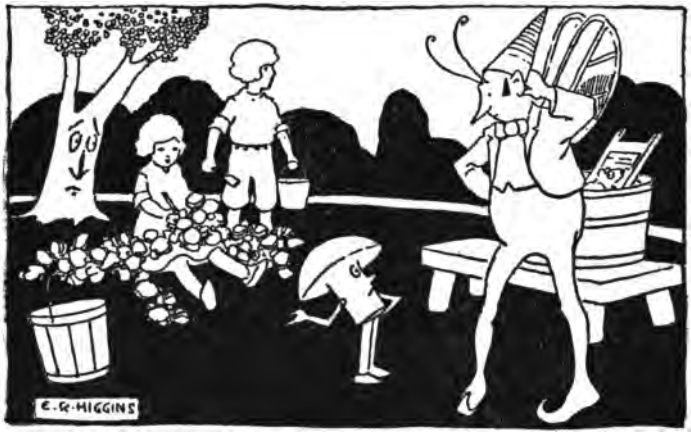
"The Fairy Queen sent us to help you," said one of them, "as she doesn't need us any more in Dreamland just now."

"What luck!" cried Rubadub, hitting his hands together, and he handed the katkins over right away. "You'll have to get glue and varnish from the Fairy Queen's palace. I haven't the right kind."

Well—the little fairies said they would, and they took the katkins and flew away, never thinking that something was going to happen.

Nancy and Nick went back to their painting, Rubadub to his scrubbing, and the Magical Mushroom was trying to be useful by keeping peace among the impatient creatures still clamoring to be gone. Being able to speak any kind of language, he was the very person for this. Besides, he was very wise and quite a philosopher. He kept telling them that "All things come to him who waits," and "Who laughs last laughs best," and "All's well that ends well," and a lot of things like that. He thought he just about had things settled when Bill Blackbird croaked out, "Yes, but it's the early bird that gets the worm." And at that the hubbub started all over again.

I wonder who was the most impatient, the boys and girls in the Land-Where-Spring-Was-Coming, or the animals and birds and flowers who wished to get there?



"BLOWING BLIZZARDS!" EXCLAIMED RUBADUB, "WHERE ARE THE YELLOW ONES?"

CHAPTER IV: THE ERRAND

CITY children look for crocuses on their lawns as a sign of spring, the same as country children look for katkins on the willows, so it was quite necessary to get these little flowers painted with purple and gold as fast as possible.

The twins worked and worked, setting each blossom in the row with the others when it was finished. By and by Rubadub left off scrubbing Snoopy Skunk (who did need it most awfully) and peeped in to see how they were getting along.

"Blowing blizzards!" he exclaimed. "Where are the yellow ones? They're all purple and white."

"Oh, no," Nick showed him, "some are white and purple and some are just purple."

"But where are the yellow ones?" asked Rubadub. "If we don't send some yellow ones, the kiddies will think we've sent hare-bells by mistake."

"Oh!" exclaimed Nancy. "We didn't think it mattered. The oriole got so impatient to be off, he hopped on the pot of yellow paint and upset it."

"Blowing bl——!" Rubadub began, but he was much too chagrined to finish. "The yellow paint spilled! My dears, do you know how difficult it is to get yellow paint? But of course you don't, or you wouldn't be so calm about it. It's not only very hard to get, but of all colors it's the most needed in spring. It would be impossible to have a real spring without yellow, with the daffodils and dandelions and buttercups and daisies and tulips depending on it, and the new

leaves on the trees also, which we always mix with yellow when they first appear. Now what?"

"Why is it so hard to get?" asked Nick. "Perhaps our Green Shoes could help us, couldn't they?"

Rubadub pounded his hands together suddenly, as he had a habit of doing when pleased, and his face grew radiant. "Why, that's the very ticket, Nickie!" he cried. "The *very* ticket! Suppose you and Nancy take some little buckets to the Fairy Queen's Palace over on the other side of Fairyland and get me about two quarts. She makes it herself out of sunshine, you know, and if Mr. Sun has been out much lately, she'll likely have quite a lot. There's another thing! Those fairies haven't come back yet from the willow-grove, and I'm getting worried about them. I wish you'd go around that way and see what's keeping them. I need them right away to stick some fuzzy buds on the alders and to wake up some of the sleepy grass under the ground. It doesn't know the snow's gone yet!"

"Perhaps," suggested Nancy, "if you waved your wand, the fairies would come back."

Rubadub grew sober. "Yes, I know I could do that, but the Fairy Queen thinks we're lazy if we depend upon wands too much. Likely as not she'd say, 'There's that good-for-nothing Rubadub again, waving that wand of his! I wonder what he wants now! If he keeps on, he'll wear it out, surely. When I put him in charge of Scrub-Up-Land I expected him to do a few things for himself, and if he's going to let *me* do all his work for him, I may as well dismiss him and get some one else who can.' That's what she'd say," and he raised his eyebrows comically.

The twins laughed. "That doesn't sound like the kind Fairy Queen, Mr. Rubadub. Would she be as cross as that?"

Rubadub laughed, too. "No, I'm only joking," he said, "only I make it a point never to bother the Queen when I can help it. She's *so* busy, poor soul, and whenever any of her helpers like myself wave our wands, it's like ringing your telephone-bell. She's got to stop whatever she's doing and find out what's wanted. Don't you

want to go for the paint and to hunt for the lost fairies?"

"Oh, yes, yes, yes!" declared Nick, hopping around excitedly. "We'd love to, shouldn't we, Nancy? Only we thought your wand might get the lost fairies more quickly."

"They're not far away, I think you'll find," said Rubadub, nodding mysteriously. "Now, here are your buckets. You'd better be off."

In a twinkling the Green Shoes lifted the twins into the air, the empty paint-buckets clutched in their hands, and the Magical Mushroom close beside them. "I think," said he, "that we are going to have an adventure. I sort of feel it in my, in my"—he was going to say, "bones," but remembering that he hadn't any, he had to think of another word—"in my insides," he finished. "It's just like your Grandpa's rheumatism, which always informs him of a coming storm. Yes, I'm quite sure we are going to have an adventure."

Along they all whizzed, as fast as the fastest air-ship, on their way to the Fairy Queen's Palace. Only, instead of going straight, as the bees do, they asked the Green Shoes to take them

around by the willow-grove in the Land-Where-Spring-Was-Coming.

As they approached, it was plain to be seen that something was wrong. Very wrong! The

STANDING OVER THE FAIRIES WAS THAT KNAVE, JACK FROST!

place looked dark and gloomy and altogether unhappy, not a bit as though winter were over and spring were on the way. Mr. Sun was nowhere to be seen, and the air was so cold they shivered with the chill of it. Besides, Robin Redbreast was nowhere to be seen either, nor the March Hare nor Wally Woodchuck, and last but most important of all, there *wasn't a single*

katkin anywhere. The twigs were as bare as eggs; they were not even varnished yet. *Where* could the missing fairies be? *What* could have happened to them?

"Aha," said the Magical Mushroom, suspiciously, looking around on all sides. "Aha!" And then he pointed to an old hollow stump. "Just as I thought," he nodded, "the sly old rascal!"

And following his glance the twins saw all the little fairies huddled together in a bunch, buds and glue and all! And standing over them, punching and teasing them dreadfully, was no other than that knave, Jack Frost!

"'TD BE A NICE ONE TO LET THEM COME IN AND SPOIL MY FUN," SAID JACK FROST.

CHAPTER V: THE FAIRY QUEEN'S PALACE

ALTHOUGH Jack Frost was a tricky fellow, nobody minded his pranks in the fall and winter. Folks said, "There's a time and place for everything and Jack Frost is all right in his place." When he painted over newly cleaned windows with his fantastic patterns, they were quite patient with him (of course they were *lovely* pictures, I must admit that) and when he cracked water pitchers, and fastened down pump-handles, and made little creeks stand still, they humored him and hardly fussed a bit. "It's win-

ter and he has a right to do as he pleases," they said.

But when the Spring Fairy was just over the hill, and Jack Frost was supposed to gather up his strings (for tying pump-handles) and hammers (for breaking water-pitchers), and paint-brushes (for painting ferns on the windows), and then skidaddle in the opposite direction, most generally his disposition got mean. Oh, so mean I can't tell you! He didn't want to go, and he'd linger and linger, and after people had their straw hats all dusted off for warm weather, and the parlor-curtains down to clean house, they'd get pretty cross because he poked round so long.

He'd hide, you see, and when people thought he'd gone for good, he'd jump out at them, and blow down their necks and nip at their fingers. No wonder they got out of sorts!

But the worst of it was, he was always snooping around on the lookout for Robin Redbreast and the first pussy-willows, so that he could scare them away. If he once let the birds and the buds get a chance, he knew that the Spring Fairy

would hurry over the hill and he couldn't stay much longer.

"Aha!" said the Magical Mushroom, "so *this* is the trouble! I thought Jack Frost was back of it all. Jack!" he called sharply. "Stop annoying those fairies right away, and let them out of that old stump, or I'll tell the Fairy Queen at once."

But Jack only laughed impudently, pinching a little fairy's toes hard. "I'm not afraid of the Fairy Queen," he mocked. "She's too busy to bother with the weather, anyway. Besides, I'm a sort of a fairy myself and I do as I please. Do you think I'm going to let the Spring Fairy chase me away until I'm quite ready? No, sir! She's right over the top of that hill—I've seen her peeping, and so's the robin you scrubbed up so fine. I've heard his airish chirp. And Belinda Bluebird is right at his heels! I'd be a nice one to let them all come in and spoil my fun. No, sir, here I am and here I intend to stay."

Very brave words indeed, were they not, but blustery. And when people get blustery it's a pretty sure sign they're afraid of something. The

Magical Mushroom perceived this, as he was a very shrewd old chap, but just what it could be that Jack was afraid of, he couldn't think for a minute. Then he had it. It popped into his head, like a shot, the thing Jack was afraid of, and he laughed softly.

"Come, kiddies," he said to the twins quickly, taking their hands again. "Bring your buckets and wish yourselves to the Fairy Queen's Palace right away."

And Jack, looking after them, frowned in a worried way. He very much suspected trouble.

But we must follow the little travelers and see what happened after they had left Jack Frost. Away they whizzed faster than your engine on its shiny tin track, and before you could write your name they had arrived at the Fairy Queen's front gate.

Nimble Toes, her doorman, let them in and took them straight to the queen, who had been very busy talking to the polka-dot elephant from Topsy-Turvy-Land, but she turned at once and welcomed her new guests.

She was exquisitely beautiful and looked ex-

actly as Nancy had hoped she would look, with lovely kind eyes that smiled almost all of the time, and wonderful wavy hair. And as for her gown, it was woven of silver gossamer and had taken a hundred years to make.

THE FAIRY QUEEN WAS EVER SO PUT OUT ABOUT IT.

When she heard the disgraceful way in which Jack Frost was behaving, she was ever so put out about it. "My, oh my!" she exclaimed so emphatically that her crown slid sideways and she had to stop to straighten it. "Here I've been so busy I haven't had time to notice what is going on in the Land-Where-Spring-Is-Coming.

So Jack is up to his impish tricks again, is he? Now just let me think a minute." And she tapped her wand thoughtfully.

"You see," she said presently, "Jack's sort of a fairy himself, and I have no direct power over him, and he knows it."

Then the Mushroom thought it time to mention the idea that had occurred to him in the willow grove. "Please, your Majesty," said he, with one of his grand bows, "couldn't Mr. Sun do something for us? Jack Frost is dreadfully afraid of him."

"Mr. Sun!" cried the Fairy Queen, quickly. "Yes, but where is he? He's completely disappeared. I haven't seen him for a week and four days and three hours and eleven minutes and twenty seconds. It's twenty-one seconds now! No, twenty-two! No,—oh well, never mind! I haven't seen him for a long time, anyway. I'm needing him dreadfully, too, for other things. I'm completely out of yellow paint, and I can't make another drop until he sends me a few beams."

"Oh," cried both twins at once, holding up

their empty buckets, "that's what our errand is about. We haven't any yellow paint for the spring flowers at all."

"Then," nodded the Fairy Queen, "there's only one thing to do. Mr. Sun must be found *at once*. Somebody must hunt him up for me, and tell him how much he is needed."

"May we go?" asked Nick quickly. "It's such fun traveling.

The Queen looked too astonished to speak. "You!" she exclaimed, after her breath came back.

"Yes, ma'am, Nancy and me! We've got our Green Shoes and the Magical Mushroom won't let us get lost. Will you?" he said confidently turning to his faithful little fairy friend.

"Ahem!" coughed the Mushroom. "It—it's quite a large order, Nickie, but if her Majesty says so, I'll try anything once. It shouldn't be hard. The only thing is that as Mr. Sun is not to be seen, it's hard to tell exactly what direction to go."

By this time the Queen had had time to think it over, and she nodded encouragingly. "You're

brave children," she smiled, "and I believe you can do it. If you go to the home of Mr. Morning Star, I'm sure he can direct you. I have his address." And she called to Twinkle Pen, her secretary, to go get it out of her desk.

"Here it is, your Graciousness," that fairy replied shortly, after rummaging in the drawer marked "Stars." And the Fairy Queen read aloud, "Corner of Dawn Avenue and Eastern Road, Earlymorn. You may leave your buckets here until you return. Good-by, now, kiddies, you'd better be off so we can get our little fairies out of trouble as soon as possible."

Then she kissed them both and shook hands with the Magical Mushroom, calling to the South Wind to guide them, and in a trice the Green Shoes had lifted them far above the Palace towers.

UP AND UP AND UP THEY WENT, THE SOUTH WIND GUIDING.

CHAPTER VI: MR. MORNING STAR WAKENS MR. SUN

Up and up and up they went, the South Wind guiding them, and floating as gently as thistle down on the kindly breeze. After quite a few minutes of traveling, they arrived at Dawn Avenue, and after a few seconds more they discovered where it crossed Eastern Road. Sure enough, right on the corner was a very *shiny* house, with points sticking in all directions, like a chestnut-burr, or a lantern on a very dark night, when the rays point out like fine needles.

They knocked with a very bright brass knocker which was hanging out, and in a minute a great window overhead was pushed up and a cheery voice called down, "Who's there?" The children didn't have to be told that it was Mr. Morning Star himself.

"It's Nancy and Nick and the Magical Mushroom," answered Nick blinking, for somehow when Mr. Star appeared things grew still more dazzlingly radiant.

"Nancy and Nick from way down on the Earth!" exclaimed Mr. Star, so surprised he nearly fell out of the window.

"Yes," answered the little boy. "We're hunting for Mr. Sun. The Fairy Queen needs him, and so do the willow-bud fairies, because the oriole spilled the yellow paint and Jack Frost is acting perfectly awful and Mr. Rubadub's afraid he'll be late with the spring, and——"

"Hold on, hold on!" cried Mr. Morning Star, more amazed than ever. "It's about as easy to understand as a Siamese puzzle. I'd better slip on my breakfast-coat and come down, and then I can hear all about it."

Once inside, and after a nice dish of porridge, which seems to be the only thing star-people and moon-people care about, serving the same to their guests, the twins told the whole story to Mr. Morning Star and asked if he could help them.

"Sure I can!" he promised them at once. "Old Man Sun is a fine fellow and a good friend of mine, for we've been chums all our lives. But I'll tell you a secret—he's getting lazy in his old age, and when he gets to bed some nights in his comfortable cloud-blankets, all gray and soft and woolly, with a nice pink counterpane on top, he rolls over and snores and sleeps so hard he never hears his alarm-clock at all in the morning. He's slept two weeks come Sunday, and he's surely rested by this time. I tell you what I'll do—I've an excellent plan." And Mr. Morning Star shook and laughed about something which seemed to tickle him mightily.

"I'll ring his telephone bell," chuckled he. "And Mr. Sun can't shut it off like he can the alarm-clock, and go to sleep again. That's just what I'll do."

"Ting-a-ling-a-ling-a-ling!" rang Mr. Star,

right away without losing any time, and it sounded so loud all through the heavens, that you must have heard it down on the earth, I'm sure. The twins danced for joy. "That ought to waken him," laughed Nancy.

"I should say!" smiled Mr. Star, "because his telephone is right at his ear."

"Ting-a-ling-a-ling-a-ling!" shrilled the bell again, louder and more persistently than ever.

That fetched him! Mr. Sun threw off his gray, woolly cloud-blankets, and his pink counter-pane, and rolled right out of bed, making such a bright light over all the sky that the children couldn't look at him at all.

"Hello, everybody!" he called cheerily, for that was one thing about Mr. Sun—he always wakened in a good humor. "Who's ringing me up? Is it morning yet?" And he went to his telephone to find out who wanted him.

"Morning!" laughed Mr. Morning Star. "I should say it was. It's fourteen mornings. They're having a dreadful time down on the earth without you, and I thought you'd be wanting to get busy and——"

"My, my! is that so?" interrupted Mr. Sun anxiously. "What's the trouble?"

Then Nickie took Mr. Star's place at the 'phone and gave Mr. Sun the Fairy Queen's message.

THERE WAS MR. SUN, LOOKING VERY STERN INDEED.

"Well, I declare!" exclaimed Mr. Sun, "I have trouble with that fellow Jack Frost every year. So he's at it again! You go back now and tell the Fairy Queen that I'll fix everything in a jiffy, and not to worry any more."

So the twins and the Mushroom left Mr. Morning Star's house after thanking him, and

the South Wind and the Green Shoes took them safely to earth again. But on their way to the Fairy Queen's Palace they passed the willow-grove again, and, stopping for a little while, this is what they saw and heard.

A sunbeam fell suddenly across Jack Frost's feet and he looked up in alarm. Well he might be frightened, for there was Mr. Sun himself looking right at him very sternly indeed.

Jack hung his head, for he knew he'd been doing wrong, and that he had no business there in the Land-Where-Spring-Was-Coming.

He looked around slyly. "I'll just step behind these trees," he thought, "until Mr. Sun goes away, and then I'll come out again."

But Mr. Sun wasn't to be fooled. "Come back here, you scamp!" he called sharply. "What are you leaving your hammer for?" (The hammer Jack used on water pitchers!)

"Oh, did I forget it?" exclaimed the foxy fellow, coming back and pretending to be surprised. "I'll just stick it into my pocket." Which he did, and then sneaked behind the trees again.

But Mr. Sun wasn't going to be fooled that

way, either. "Come back here, you fraud," he commanded sternly. "What are you leaving your string for?" (The string Jack Frost tied down pump-handles with!)

"Oh, did I forget that, too?" declared Jack in pretended surprise. "I'll just roll it up and stick it in my other pocket." Which he did, and then sneaked off again.

But Mr. Sun was getting tired of his philandering, and he knew perfectly well what the fellow was trying to do. "Come now, you rogue!" he cried crossly. "Take your paint-brush, too, while you're at it and be gone for good." (The paint-brush for marking up windows!)

That was the end. Jack gathered up all his belongings and shuffled out of the forest and down the road and disappeared in the distance *for good and all!*

The willow-bud fairies jumped out of the old stump where Jack had them cornered, and began gluing on the katkins as fast as they could, first varnishing the branches a lovely shiny brown. The Spring Fairy, a lovely maiden in a robe of

white cloud-gossamer, eyes like the deep blue of the sky, and hair spun of sunbeams, came dancing happily, with Robin Redbreast perched on one shoulder and Belinda Bluebird on the other.

Then the twins continued on their way to the Fairy Queen's Palace, for their buckets of yellow paint. Dear knows what Mr. Rubadub would be thinking, off in Scrub-Up-Land, with no help at all, and all the creatures impatient to be spring-cleaned.

They asked their little Green Shoes to hurry as fast as they could.

"THANK GOODNESS!" CRIED RUBADUB, WHEN HE SAW THE TWINS COMING.

CHAPTER VII: THE STORY OF BILL BLACKBIRD

"THANK goodness!" cried Rubadub, when he saw the twins coming. He mopped his face with his handkerchief and breathed a loud sigh of relief. "I'd just about given you up, kiddies, and was quite despairing about the yellow paint. I've been trying to make up my mind whether to color the daffodils pink or blue, and whether the buttercups and dandelions would look better red or lavender. When it came to daisies and pansies and marigold and wood-sorrel and mustard and primrose and fox-glove and zenias and 'sturtiums

and cut-and-come-again," he stopped for breath —"I didn't dare to think the colors I'd have to make them. My, but I'm glad you're here safe and sound! These creatures are nearly driving me crazy."

Nancy and Nick set their buckets on the ground and rolled up their sleeves once more, while the Magical Mushroom started in to make peace. "You'll all have to be patient!" he told them, "for everything has its turn in the Land-Where-Spring-Is-Coming. If the goldfinch appeared first instead of Robin Redbreast, people would think he was Robin come in a borrowed coat, and Mr. Goldfinch wouldn't get a bit of credit for being himself, and if the peewee got in ahead of the warbler, the bird-books would all have to be written over again. You'll just have to wait, my friends, that's all."

Well, Nancy and Nick got the crocuses and early wood-flowers started off safely at last, and were just beginning the daffodils, when Mr. Rubadub toted over Chris Crow. "He won't behave at all," complained the fairyman, "and he bothers me so! I wonder if you won't fix him

up for me and get him out of the way. He's a general nuisance every year, he's so afraid that Farmer Smith will plant his corn before he arrives. I can't convince him that it will be two months yet before the farmer thinks of such a thing, but it's no use and he's giving me a headache with his screeching. His picture is on page fifteen of the "Bird-Book" and the stove-polish —I mean crow-polish—is on the middle shelf."

"We'll fix him!" nodded Nick, and Chris flapped down off Rubadub's shoulder like a spoiled baby having his own way.

"And trim his wings," suggested Rubadub. "The rough bark on the dead hickory-tree where he lives has nearly ruined them."

Now, what happened hasn't a thing to do with this story, except that it had a result, which was *very* important. When Nancy was clipping with her little sharp scissors, Chris gave a jerk and his wing got a dreadful clip. It didn't hurt much, but it made the wing crooked, and with Mr. Crow having such a reputation for straight flying, it made him furious.

"Now, see what you've done," he scolded. "I'll

never be able to fly straight again as long as I live!" And he went on and on and on at such a rate that the twins were nearly distracted. Even when Nancy evened it up by clipping the other wing, he wasn't satisfied and aired his feeling so loudly that all the birds came hurrying.

Mr. Crow was just flying out of the gate, when Bill Blackbird arrived with his usual croak, to see what the trouble was about and when he saw Chris disappearing around the corner as shiny as a new overshoe, cawing as though his life depended upon it, Bill couldn't believe his eyes.

"Well, I never!" he exclaimed indignantly. "I never in all my life!" And he went over into a corner and sulked.

He'd been furious about Robin Redbreast and Belinda Bluebird getting out of Scrub-Up-Land ahead of him, to begin with, not that he envied Robin his brick-colored front or Belinda her new blue jacket and orange-dyed blouse—not he—but he did want to get out to get some nice juicy bugs, and they wouldn't let him go until he was finished.

When he saw Chris Crow flapping his way to

the Land-Where-Spring-Was-Coming, that was the limit of his patience. Bill could endure it no longer, and he decided to think up a plan that would hurry things up a bit. "What's the

"MY NAME'S OLIVER ORIOLE," PIPPED BILL BLACKBIRD.

use of having brains," he boasted, "if you don't use them?" So he sat and sat, and thought and thought, gazing over Nick's shoulder at the Big Bird-Book, when suddenly he hit on an idea that almost tickled him to death.

"Chk! Chk! Chk!" he tittered to himself creakily in his rusty wagon-wheel voice. "I'll fool them all yet. Just one more peep at the

"Bird-Book" and I'll know exactly what to do!"

Now Bill was smart, but he had a poor memory, and when a person intends to deceive people, he must be sure that his memory is in good working order. Of course he might have deceived Nancy and Nick, but the Magical Mushroom was a wise old fairy and you had to get up pretty early in the morning if you wanted to fool him.

This was his plan!

He thought that if his name came so far down on the list that he wasn't going to get out of Scrub-Up-Land until Decoration Day maybe, why he'd pretend he was somebody else, and thus stand a better chance to get away early to the Land-Where-Spring-Was-Coming.

So he tiptoed up quite close and had a good look at the "Bird-Book" with its lovely colors, which the twins and Rubadub were copying onto the real birds in their turn. On the page before him was a beautiful bird, all brilliant orange and black, whom Bill recognized at once. "So that's the person who is to get his freedom next!" thought Bill jealously. "Well, I'll just pretend

I'm he, then I'll get fixed up at once. Me for the Land-Where-Spring-Is-Coming and the nice juicy bugs 'n' all!"

Well, pretty soon Nick finished Sid Song Sparrow's gray shirt, which he fastened on with little brown studs; then he handed him his brown cap. As Sid flew away whistling happily into the sunshine, Nick called, "Next" just like they do in your Daddy's barber-shop, when it's somebody's turn to get his hair cut.

That was Bill's chance! He stepped right up out of line like you've seen cheeky people do at a ticket-window, when they haven't any right to at all, and said, "That's me, I guess." He was too much excited to bother with grammar.

Nick took a good look at Bill, then at the picture in the "Bird-Book." "What's your name?" he asked.

"Oliver Oriole," fibbed Bill.

"I guess that's right," nodded Nick, doubtfully, looking at the book again, "but you don't look it. You must have got pretty dirty down south, Mr. Oriole, to be so black now, although

I must say you've grown some. Just wait until I get the orange paint."

In a few minutes Bill was looking exactly like the picture in the "Bird-Book," as gorgeous as a July sunset. When he caught a glimpse of himself in the mirror he was so delighted, he swelled up until he nearly burst.

"Fine feathers certainly do make fine birds, don't they!" he remarked, smoothing his vest.

If he had only kept quiet, no doubt he would have been out of Scrub-Up-Land in about five more seconds, following Robin Redbreast, and Belinda Bluebird and Chris Crow to the Land-Where-Spring-Was-Coming. But Bill's voice sounded like—just Bill's and not another thing in the world, or Fairyland, and the Magical Mushroom heard him, as he came in just then for some soap for Rubadub to wash the dirt off the mole's nose.

"What's that?" he inquired curiously, looking Bill over from foot to head.

Bill repeated his remark.

"Who is this gentleman?" the Mushroom asked Nick.

"Oliver Oriole," Nick told him. "His picture was next in the "Bird-Book."

"Little large for Oliver, isn't he?"

Bill shifted uneasily from one foot to the other and back again.

"But perhaps he's grown since I saw him last," persisted the wise Mushroom. "But you never can tell what a change of diet will do for a person—perhaps the beetles down south are bigger than ours."

"Oh, yes, they are," cried Bill eagerly, thinking he saw a way of escape. "Perfect whoppers. Big as horses!"

"Whoppers seem to be right in your line!" went on the Mushroom, much to Bill's discomfort, while a queer little smile spread over his wise old face.

There wasn't any answer to that, so Bill pulled down his waistcoat again, and said he'd be going.

"Better try your notes before leaving, wouldn't you, Mr. Oriole?" suggested the Mushroom. "Since you've grown so big, your voice doesn't seem quite so musical. Don't you think you need a little practice?"

"Oh, no, no!" protested Bill, moving away. "I do my trills perfectly."

"Just try a few notes," urged the other. "There is no hurry."

Bill thought there was, but what could he do? He dared not refuse, so he opened his mouth and let out some croaks as musically as he could —which was like somebody writing with a loud scratchy pen, or scraping the burn off a tin pan, or changing gear on a car when you don't know how. He stopped suddenly. "My!" he gasped. "I can't imagine what's the matter with my voice. I must have caught cold. I shall have to tell Mrs. Blackbird—I mean Mrs. Oriole—to put a plaster on me at once."

"I certainly should!" advised the Mushroom. "You'll have so much time to get cured."

"What do you mean?" demanded Bill sharply.

"Why, it's too soon for you to go," said the other. "Orioles don't leave Scrub-Up-Land for a whole month yet."

"But," gasped Bill, pointing toward the "Bird-Book," "it says so there! Just look for yourself!"

"Oh, that's a mistake," the Mushroom answered. "The wind blew the leaves over without Nickie noticing. No, Bill Blackbird was next on the list. Turn back, Nick, and see if I'm not right."

Bill groaned. What a goose he'd been and what a wretched memory he had! Why hadn't it occurred to him that orioles don't get to the Land-Where-Spring-Is-Coming until the middle of May? He was dreadfully ashamed of himself.

"I'm Bill Blackbird," he had to confess then. "I'm not Oliver Oriole at all and I wish you'd rub off all this paint that doesn't belong on me."

Which they did at once, and Bill flew off in his dingy rusty winter clothes. If you can get close enough to him, you'll find I'm right.

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"WELL, I NEVER!" EXCLAIMED RUBADUB IN SURPRISE. "OUT WITH IT, BOTH OF YOU."

CHAPTER VIII: BEN BUNNY GETS SPRING-CLEANED, SCRAMBLE SQUIRREL, TOO

RUBADUB, the fairyman, next called to Ben Bunny that it was his turn to get spring-cleaned. Ben is first cousin to the March Hare, you know, and, to whisper a secret, had already been to the Land-Where-Spring-Was-Coming, having made several trips there from Dreamland, even during the winter months, when spring was as far off as the Equator.

But he did need a good scrubbing now and he knew it, for the way to Dreamland is underground. Besides, he'd been asleep a long time

and you do get tousled when you are asleep, and you always need washing and combing when you waken. And another besides! Ben had still another reason for coming to see Rubadub, and you shall hear it.

Scramble Squirrel was with him, and Scramble had the same reason Ben had for coming. He, too, had been wintering in, or near, Dreamland, spending quite a generous portion of his time in a bedstead of tree-roots, with his pantry (or one of his pantries at least) right beside him, so he could reach out and help himself to food without disturbing the covers. He needed scrubbing as much as Ben Bunny—combing, too, his tail was so tangled. But both had something on their minds besides being spring-cleaned.

So when Rubadub called Ben, Scramble came running, too.

"You two are sights," grinned the fairyman, dipping his scrubbing-brush (the hedgehog) into a bucket of suds. "If dirt were a penny a pound, you'd both be millionaires."

For awhile he was very busy lathering and scrubbing and rinsing and rubbing, until the

friends looked as spick and span as laundry baskets.

"You'll do now. Run along and have a good time, the pair of you," nodded Rubadub, throwing down his big towel and standing back to admire his work.

But they didn't move, Ben and Scramble didn't. They just looked at each other with sheepish grins and never lifted a toe.

" 'S wrong?" asked the fairyman in surprise, suddenly growing sober. "Aren't you satisfied? What have I left out? Bay rum, or hair oil, or Eau de Cologne? It isn't considered polite any more to get too smelled up."

"Go on," giggled Scramble, "tell 'm!"

"No, you!" begged Ben, his little pink nose wriggling in a most embarrassed way and blushing quite red.

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Rubadub in surprise. "Have you two beauties lost your senses? What's wrong? Out with it, both of you."

Ben hopped up on one side then, and Scramble to the other and whispered something into the fairyman's ears at precisely the same instant.

"You're queer ones, sure enough," said Rubadub, looking too flabbergasted for words. "Nancy and Nick, come here at once, will you? I've something to tell you."

The twins came running.

"What do you think!" he told them. "These two have got a notion. Ben wants to exchange his long ears for Scramble's fine tail and Scramble is just as anxious to exchange his tail for Ben's beautiful ears."

The secret was out at last and now you know the real reason these friends had for wishing to come to Scrub-Up-Land.

The twins clapped their hands and danced around in great glee. "Won't they look funny," laughed Nick, stopping suddenly, "you're going to do it, aren't you, Mr. Rubadub?"

The master of Scrub-Up-Land laid his finger beside his nose and thought deeply. "Yes, I'd like to," he said slowly, "only the Fairy Queen doesn't like these flipperty-gibbet notions the creatures take sometimes. Besides, the place for them to go when they wish to try a new stunt is Topsy-Turvy-Land."

It was the wise old Magical Mushroom who decided the matter. "I believe," he said, "I'd let them try it. The Fairy Queen wishes every one to be happy, and sometimes the only way people *can* be happy is to find out how foolish they've been."

"That's so," agreed Rubadub. "All right, you two rascals. I'll exchange your ears and tail. Come here! Where's that wand of mine?"

A few magical words, and presto, the change was made!

Scramble wiggled Ben's long ears delightedly, and Ben swished Scramble's bushy tail around, too pleased for anything.

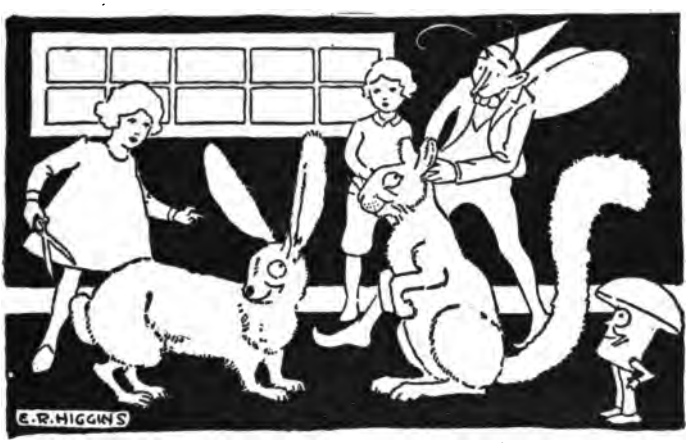
"Oh, thank you, Mr. Rubadub," they said over and over again, bowing their gratitude. "We'll be going now, if you don't mind." Then they started for the gate, intending to go back to the Land-Where-Spring-Was-Coming, the fairy-man and the twins looking after them.

"Would you mind doing me a favor?" asked Rubadub, turning to the twins, when the queer little creatures had disappeared.

"We'll do anything you ask us, Mr. Ruba-

dub," answered Nancy obligingly. "Won't we, Nick?"

You know what Nick said to that, so Rubadub went on. "Your Green Shoes will take you any-



PRESTO, THE CHANGE WAS MADE!

where, as you know, so how would it do for you to follow those two scalawags and find out how they are getting along. If they get into trouble I'd like to know it, so I can help them out, and I have a pretty good notion I'll be needed. They're both too proud to come begging if things go wrong, and I'd like you to keep an eye on them for a time."

"Indeed we shall," they promised promptly, and instantly asked their Green Shoes to follow Scramble.

When Ben and his squirrel friend had left the gate it was necessary for them to part company, as they lived in opposite directions. So of course the twins could only follow one at a time.

Whisk! Instantly they were lifted into the air, the Magical Mushroom and all, and set down directly in the middle of a little green path in the Land-Where-Spring-Was-Coming. Right ahead, tearing along as fast as he could go, was Scramble Squirrel. Only, had the twins not known all about him, they should never have recognized him at all, with Ben Bunny's great long ears stuck on top of his head, and his tail as gone as yesterday.

When he stopped at the maple-tree, the children suddenly remembered a woodpecker's house in the same tree, two floors above Mr. Squirrel's, so in a trice they wished themselves into it, as Mr. Woodpecker had not arrived yet, and there was nobody at home.

"OH!" SHRIEKED MRS. SQUIRREL, FAINTING PROMPTLY.

CHAPTER IX: SCRAMBLE SQUIRREL RETURNS

SCRAMBLE SQUIRREL started to climb the maple-tree where he lived, his house being about half way up in a deep, roomy hole.

Nancy and Nick, peeping from Will Woodpecker's old house above, could see Mrs. Squirrel, too, briskly getting lunch, for she was expecting her husband home that day from Scrub-Up-Land. She had put out all the best tidies, and had made excellent dessert, which was now cooling in the kitchen, for the twins could

smell it very plainly from their hiding place just above. Very delicious it was!

Scramble wasn't thinking of anything except how glad he was to get home again, and how nice it was going to be to get some of Samantha's cooking. When he smelled the fragrant smells he wiggled his whiskers and climbed faster than ever.

Crash! Down he came suddenly right on his nose on a stone, which hurt him so much, it was no good for smelling with for some time after—the nose, I mean, not the stone. He was so surprised, that he couldn't stand up at once. It was the very first time in his life he had ever fallen trying to climb a tree. He had the proud title, you know, of Champion Tree-Climber of the Forest. But finally he crawled to his feet, looking dreadfully ashamed, his feelings hurt worse than his nose.

Up he went again, however, after looking in every direction to make sure no one had seen him. He was convinced that it was no fault of his, but that some bark must have come off the tree, taking him with it.

But although he got a little further this time —smash! Down he came again like a brick.

He wasn't hurt badly this time either, but he was so mortified that he neither looked to right nor left, but jumped right up and made a dash for the tree again, determined, if possible, to find out what was the matter, and also determined to get up to his house where Samantha and the good smells were.

He mopped his face with his little red handkerchief, panting for breath. "My!" he gasped. "Do you 'spose it's because I haven't my tail for a balancer? My clutchers are all right, I'm sure, for Rubadub sharpened them all on his big grindstone." And he looked at his long sharp claws proudly.

Then something on top of his head suddenly began to feel heavy and queer, and he put up his paw to investigate. What could it be—some big acorns or some pine-cones that had fallen onto him? Or some burrs that had stuck when he fell? But the minute he touched them he knew! He'd completely forgotten about Ben Bunny's long ears.

"Jiminy Christmas!" he exclaimed impatiently, "so that's it! These heavy old things are going to spoil my climbing, are they? Well, not if I can help it. I'll just have to learn that I'm heavier in front than behind now, and learn also to be very careful. I shall have to do that, or else I'll have to learn to climb up backwards."

Well, to make a long story short, by clutching and scratching and straining, Scramble *did* get up the tree, or almost up, for it suddenly occurred to him to surprise his wife, although why she hadn't heard him long ago, I'm sure I don't know. But it might be that she was rattling stove lids or something in the kitchen.

She was about to set some acorn muffins on the table when the tips of two long ears appeared suddenly in the doorway and a voice cried, "Boo!" very loudly.

"Oh!" shrieked Mrs. Squirrel, fainting promptly, the muffins spilling everywhere. And no wonder! It was the first time in her life she had ever heard of a rabbit climbing a tree.

Of course she recovered quickly after Scramble had thrown a cup of water over her,

but when she heard what her husband had done she made an awful fuss. "It gives me a headache to look at you," she said. "What will you be doing next?"

OUT POPPED SCRAMBLE AND TORE FOR SAFETY.

"Never mind!" Scramble comforted her, trying to pretend that he was quite satisfied with his bargain. "It will come out all right, my dear, see if it doesn't. These ears of Ben's are very handsome, you must confess."

Mrs. Squirrel hadn't anything to say to that, and so the matter ended.

Time passed, and as Scramble predicted, he

learned pretty well to climb without his bushy tail. "Besides," he explained, "I don't have to be remembering always about it sticking out and giving me away when I'm trying to hide from Fleety Fox."

Then one day *something* happened.

Scramble had gone over to Ripple Creek to get some cress for Samantha to put into the soup, when suddenly his ears went up. (Ben's ears really!)

Nancy and Nick had followed closely in their little Green Shoes, and peeping around a big stone they knew that something was wrong.

Yes, sir! There was a sound, a suspicious one, too! A faint rustling from behind the thorny-bush close by, but luckily discovered just in time.

Scramble squeezed hastily into a hole in an old stump and waited. "Wasn't it lucky that I had Ben's ears," he exulted, "I'd never have heard a thing with my old ones. I hope I'm all in, so I can't be seen! My, what a good thing it is I haven't got my tail any more. The old thing was always in the road when I tried to hide, and it took up so much room I never could tuck it

all in. I wonder if any of me is showing!" And after he'd got in every stray hair, he lay still as a mouse.

But there was something he hadn't thought of —something Nancy and Nick wished to tell him perfectly awfully, but they dared not. That would have given away his hiding hole, sure as anything.

Well, sir, up slipped Fleety Fox, for of course you've had a pretty good idea it was he—and it was—up he slipped very softly, careful not to step on a twig or a dry branch lest he announce his arrival. He had seen the little figure scurrying near the old stump and he began to nose around.

"Aha!" he sniffed with a satisfied grin. "Somebody's been here all righty, and it wasn't the day before yesterday, either. By the owls of night, I do believe it was Scramble Squirrel!" And he licked his chops hungrily.

Well, he looked and looked, and poked in all the holes, for he knew that if it were Scramble a snip of his tail was usually to be seen.

But no tail or part of tail could he spy, and

he stopped licking his chops, looking very disappointed. And then he raised his eyes.

"Ah ha!" he exclaimed softly to himself, and smiled again. "Not Scramble Squirrel, but Ben Bunny, if I'm not mistaken." For the tips of two long brown ears were sticking right out of the top of the stump. Scramble had forgotten about them completely.

Dear knows what would have happened if the twins hadn't been watching, and decided that if they were to save their foolish little friend, something would have to be done quickly.

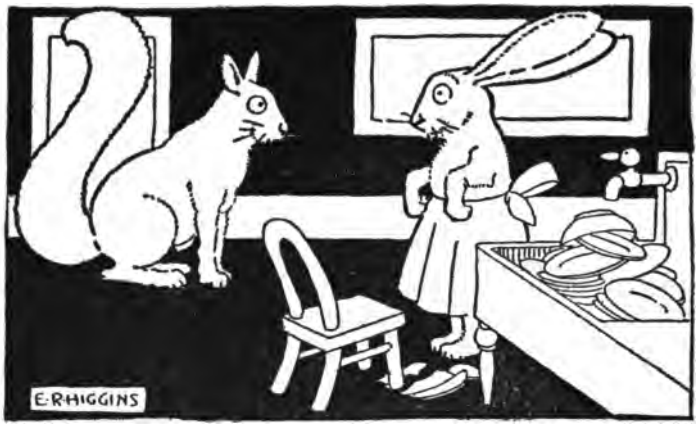
"Oh, do chase him away, Nick," whispered Nancy, just as Fleety was thinking of reaching and grabbing those two lovely looking ears in his mouth.

Nick picked up a stone and threw it, not knowing of anything else he *could* do. But it was the very thing. Fleety was so startled he jumped about a yard and the dry twigs under his feet snapped and crackled loudly. That was a warning to Scramble, who knew then that he was discovered. Out he popped at the other side

of the stump, and I wish you could have seen him tear for the nearest tree-trunk, and safety.

"My goodness!" he panted. "That was a tight squeak. These ears will be the end of me yet, if I don't hunt up Ben and beg him to let me out of my bargain. I wonder if he will?"

It was for Nancy and Nick to find out.



MRS. BUNNY DROPPED HER BEST SALAD-BOWL.

CHAPTER X: BEN BUNNY'S BARGAIN

AFTER the twins saw Scramble Squirrel leap nimbly from one tree-top to another until he was safely home, they asked their Green Shoes to take them to Ben Bunny's house, so they could report to Rubadub about the other half of their errand.

Ben had been delayed, and when they arrived he was just reaching home. They slipped behind a bush because they were sure that Ben would feel better if he thought no strangers were around. It never occurred to them that they

were eavesdropping. Really, I've a doubt if they knew what the word even meant.

Mrs. Blossom Bunny was washing the dishes when her husband arrived, as she had given him up an hour ago, and eaten her lunch alone.

In he rushed, right into the kitchen, swishing Scramble's long tail for very joy at the thought of getting home again, but it gave Mrs. Bunny such a turn that she dropped her best salad-bowl and smashed it to smithereens.

"Good land alive!" she cried, dropping into a chair. "But you did scare me, Scramble Squirrel! You don't generally come in without knocking, and I thought you were a burglar at first."

Ben laughed at that. "Take another good look at me, Blossom," he suggested, "and see who you think I am now."

So Blossom looked hard. She even put on her specks and looked, and when she saw it was her very own husband, Ben, without his beautiful ears and with a regular scrubbing-brush of a tail instead, she couldn't speak for amazement.

"I traded with Scramble," he explained, "for several reasons. First, I can get away from

Fleety Fox easier without those everlasting long ears to give away my hiding hole. And second, because perhaps I can learn to climb a tree with this handsome long tail to balance me. Besides, my dear, you'll find it useful, no doubt, to clean house with. Some dust-brush, eh?"

Mrs. Bunny didn't say much for she was a wise soul and knew that the only way to convince Ben was to let him find out things for himself. As for a dust-brush—! Already she was wondering how she'd ever put things to rights, for whenever Ben moved he knocked something over. Dust-brush, indeed! About as much as your mother could make use of a street-sweeper in the house!

But anyway, she didn't say much, giving Ben a good dinner of warmed-over victuals and telling him all the gossip.

When he had finished he wiped his mouth on his napkin, he folded it nicely, his napkin, not his mouth, I mean, and then said he believed he'd go out and practice.

"Practice! Practice what?" asked Brs. Bunny.

"Why, climbing, of course," said he. "What

else have I got this tail for, if not to learn to climb?"

Again Mrs. Bunny wisely said nothing. Wasn't she fine?

So out he went, knocking over two chairs, and pushing all the pictures crooked on the wall. It really kept his wife a whole day doing out the house again!

But he hopped along happily, wriggling his nose and swishing Scramble's tail, until he came to a tree that looked easy to climb. "Surely with this tail to balance me, and such nice rough bark," he said, "I can get up without any trouble at all."

But although he had chosen a hickory-nut tree, which Scramble Squirrel or Cob Coon could have shinnied up in no time, Ben was going to have troubles of his own. Try as he would, and hang on as he could, he couldn't get up higher than a very few inches. "Shucks!" he cried finally. "This tail's no good. It only pulls me down. Whatever made me trade my ears for it, I wonder? They were such good listeners,

too! Now I can't tell how close Fleety Fox might be."

Just as he said it, he spied a shadow almost beside him, and he nearly jumped out of his skin. "Jimineezers!" he exclaimed, "there's the old fellow now." And without stopping to mention just exactly who the "old fellow" might be, he streaked off to the briar-tangle as fast as he could hop. If he reached it, he knew he would be pretty safe, for Fleety Fox hated the briar tangle and never went in if he could help it.

Suddenly Ben chuckled to himself.

"Ho, ho!" he bragged. "Who's wise now?" And he wished Mrs. Blossom were there to see him. "Who knew enough to get rid of my long ears which were always sticking up and giving away my hiding hole, and to exchange them for a tail which is really no trouble at all, even if it doesn't help me to climb? I did," chuckled he.

He flopped into the edge of the thicket, "ha-haing" and "ho-hoing" to himself and thinking how safe he was going to be. But—what do you think? He forgot that eight long inches had been added to his length, and that Scramble's

bushy tail was sticking out quite as plainly as the nose on the parson's face. He had indeed! And the first idea he had that he wasn't altogether out of the reach of the enemy, was when he felt a sharp nip behind him.

"JIMINEEZERS!" HE EXCLAIMED. "THERE'S THE OLD FELLOW NOW."

"Ouch!" he screamed, jumping so hard that he landed right in the midst of the brambles, which hurt him some more, although there he was indeed quite safe. And he shivered and shook so you'd have thought it was threshing time, and that poor Ben was trying to shake the briars loose.

And this was what the twins heard him mutter when his teeth stopped chattering long enough for him to talk.

"I—I'm going to hunt up Scramble Squirrel the minute I get out of here, and tell him to take his stupid tail back. The idea of me giving up my beautiful ears that always told me when danger was a mile away! If I'd had them to-day, I'd never have let that wily old fox get near me, and if I'm not mistaken, I *will* have them before I'm a day older."

When he was quite sure that Fleet had got tired of waiting and had gone home, Ben slipped out to tell Blossom the news. But she never said a word, mind you. Wasn't she wonderful?

But somebody else knew about it, too—two little people and a fairy, who had seen and heard everything. Back they hurried to Scrub-Up-Land, with the Magical Mushroom, to tell Mr. Rubadub that the two animal friends had made a bad bargain and were ever so sorry about the whole thing.

The fairyman smiled sagely. "All's well that ends well," said he, waving his wand. "If I'm

not mistaken, they're happy again right this minute."

And away off in the Land-Where-Spring-Was-Coming two foolish little creatures got their own property back and vowed they'd always be satisfied in the future. It seemed almost as though they had been dreaming that they had been so foolish.

"AND," SHE ADDED, SHAKING HER FINGER, "YOU'D BETTER MEND YOUR MANNERS AND NOT BE SO CURIOUS AND YELL 'WHO' AT EVERYBODY WHO PASSES."

CHAPTER XI: MR. GRUBBY GROUNDHOG

"Say, kiddoes!" said Mr. Rubadub, rubbing a spot of soapsuds off the end of his nose, "would you object to doing another errand for me? I'm too busy to go myself, and if somebody doesn't rout the good-for-nothing old scalawag out, spring will be here and he'll be as dusty as a camel"

"Who?" asked Nick. "Who will be as dusty as a camel, Mr. Rubadub; who's a scalawag?"

"Oh, didn't I tell you?" exclaimed Rubadub. "Mr. Groundhog of course, Grubby Groundhog. The old fellow stuffs out his sides with corn 'n'

acorns 'n' sweet apples, also any green stuff that he can get ahold of in Farmer Smith's sass-patch garden, and when he hasn't left a smidgen of anything for anybody else, he hies him off to his hole underground and sneaks away to Dreamland for six solid months. Personally, I don't think Dreamland can be much of a place, because the creatures who spend the winter there are the dustiest and muddiest and dirtiest of them all. The birds who come from the South and the creatures who spend their time snooping 'round the winter woods like Ben Bunny and Scramble Squirrel, don't get half as dirty. Of course, Ben and Scramble do make trips to Dreamland once in a while, if things get too frosty for them, but they don't stay long at a time."

"We'll be ever so glad to go, Mr. Rubadub," said Nancy obligingly, unpinning her apron and telling Mr. Owl, whom she had just finished spring-cleaning, to be careful of his light shirt-front, and to try to keep his house in better order than he had done last year. "And," she added, shaking her finger, "you'd better mend

your manners and not be so curious and yell 'Who' at everybody who passes."

Oscar Owl said he'd try to remember, particularly when Munchie Mouse was around, and flew away with a great flapping toward the Land-Where-Spring-Was-Coming.

"Now, Mr. Rubadub, if you'll just tell us where to find Mr. Grubby Groundhog, we'll be off at once," remarked Nick, rolling down his sleeves.

"He lives in the Land-Where-Spring-Is-Coming, and one of his front doors is in the fence corner between the wheat-field and the old potato-patch," answered Rubadub. "If he doesn't hear you knocking, walk right in."

"All right, we'll be sure to find him," called the children starting for the big gate.

In a few minutes they were running down a woodland path near Ben Bunny's house, and they soon came out on the other side of Whispering Forest near the wheat-field. Following the fence, as Rubadub suggested, they came to a little doorway in the corner between the green winter-wheat field and the old potato-patch, now weed-grown

and muddy. But the card in the door-plate didn't say a word about Grubby Groundhog living there.

All it said was "Wally Woodchuck—His House."

There wasn't anyone 'round to ask, so Nick and Nancy rang the doorbell. But as nobody answered it they gave the door a little push and walked in. My, but it was dark and stuffy inside of Mr. Woodchuck's hall! The place certainly needed a good airing. And it was the most puzzling place you ever saw, the very puzzlingest! Here was another doorway and a hall; there was another hallway and a door; here it went up; over yonder it curved around; and on beyond it straightened out!

As nobody was to be seen, Nancy called out, "Mr. Woodchuck, Mr. Woodchuck!"

And Nick sang out, "Where are you, Wally Woodchuck? We want to ask you something." For they wanted to ask where Grubby Groundhog lived. But there wasn't any answer.

After that they came to a room, and inside the

room on a bed of straw—they could see through the crack—someone was sleeping, and snoring.

"Bz-z-z-z-z-z!" he went. "Bz-z-z-z-z-z! Sn-r-r-r-r-r! Bz-z-z-z-z-z!" And then turned over on the other side.

Nick went in and walked over quite close to the bed. "I—I—beg your padron, sir," he said to the sleepy old tousled person on the bed. "But I'd like to ask you something."

"Bz-z-z-z-z-z! Sn-r-r-r-r-r!" was all the answer he got.

"Poke him!" said Nancy. "He doesn't look very happy. Maybe he's dreaming something horrid, and he'd like us to wake him."

So Nick poked him.

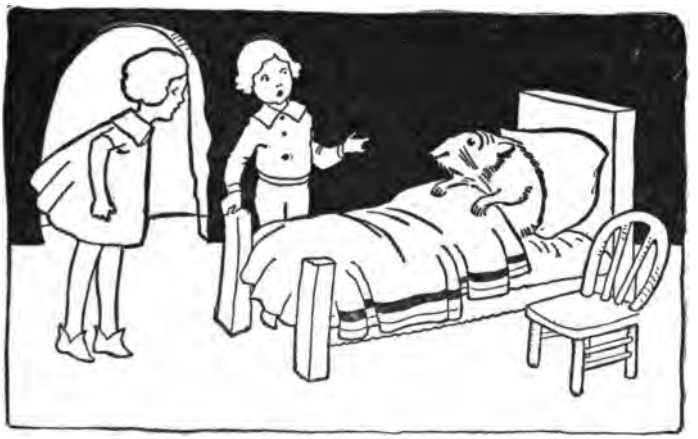
"Hey! What's that!" demanded the tousley person, sitting up in bed, and rubbing his eyes, and yawning.

"Were you dreaming?" asked Nancy, forgetting for the moment that they particularly wished to ask about Grubby Groundhog.

"Yes!" answered the other. "I had a dreadful dream about soap and water. Ugh!"

That reminded Nick of his errand. "Are you Mr. Woodchuck?" he asked.

"Whatta you want to know for?" asked the tousled person suspiciously, slowly crawling



"YES!" ANSWERED THE OTHER, "I HAD A DREADFUL DREAM ABOUT SOAP AND WATER."

out of bed, and stretching. The twins could see how thin he was. Nothing but a bag of skin and hair with some bones inside!

"We are looking for Mr. Grubby Groundhog," answered Nick, "and we thought perhaps you could tell us where he lives. There is nobody else near to ask. We thought that this

was his house, but we saw your name on the door instead. Did he move away?"

"I've always lived here," stated the thin tousled person. "Yes, I'm Mr. Woodchuck."

"Oh, then," went on Nick, "can you tell us where Mr. Groundhog lives?"

"Whatta you want him for?" asked Mr. Woodchuck. "Did somebody leave him a fortune, or is it something less pleasant?"

"Mr. Rubadub of Scrub-Up-Land sent us for him. It's time for him to get spring-cleaned, past time, really, and he hasn't showed up yet."

"Humph!" said Mr. Woodchuck under his breath. "I *knew* that dream I had about soap and water meant something." Then he asked out loud, "Did Mr. Rubadub tell you what Grubby Groundhog looks like?"

"Yes," put in Nancy eagerly. "He said he was fat and lazy and selfish."

Mr. Woodchuck made a face. "In-deed!" said he.

"Why, do you know him?" asked Nick.

"Perhaps I do and perhaps I don't," answered

Mr. Woodchuck evasively. "There are so many folks around that I get them mixed."

The twins looked disappointed. "Oh, we're so sorry!" said Nancy. "But if you can't help us, we mustn't stay. We'll have to be going. Perhaps some of your neighbors will know where Mr. Groundhog lives and they can tell us."

Mr. Woodchuck pricked up his tiny ears at this. "Why—why, perhaps I'd better go along then!" he offered. "You see I know most people and I understand their language and—"

"Oh," answered Nancy, "that's all right. We can understand, too. Our friend, the Magical Mushroom, gives us the power of understanding everybody. He gave us a charm just before we left Scrub-Up-Land, which is the same as though he was right with us. It's a piece of the pink lining out of his hat." And she fished it out of her little pocket.

"But," insisted Mr. Woodchuck with a worried look. "I think that I'd better go anyway. You—you might get lost."

"We'll be very glad to have you, knowing where folks live 'n' all," declared Nick. "Only

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we didn't wish to bother you, looking as weak as you do."

"I'm hungry, that's all," answered Mr. Woodchuck.

"Have you been sick?" asked Nancy.

"No, only asleep. I've slept for six months."

"Six months!" cried the twins together. "Why that's the way Mr. Groundhog does!"

"Ahem!" coughed Mr. Woodchuck behind his hand. "Let's be going."

So out they filed.

"I'll run ahead and ask folks, and save you the trouble," said Mr. Woodchuck. "I'll ask the owl first. He lives over there in that tree." And he ran ahead, sat up on his hind legs, and whistled. Pretty soon Oscar Owl stuck out his head, but what he said the twins couldn't hear, he was so far away.

Pretty soon Wally Woodchuck hobbled back (he was so thin he couldn't walk right) and shook his head. "Oscar couldn't give me any news of Grubby Groundhog," he said. "Says he knows him well, though."

"Maybe he isn't back from Dreamland yet," remarked Nick.

"Mebbe," said Wally.

"Now I'll run along and ask Scramble Squirrel in the maple-tree," said Mr. Woodchuck. And away he went, rather crooked but pretty fast, and whistled on Scramble.

Scramble stuck *his* head out, and after a short conversation pulled it in again, same as Oscar Owl had done.

Wally Woodchuck returned as before. "No news!" said he. "I'll try the Bunnies next." And away he went before the twins could catch up, and they soon heard him whistling to Ben and his wife.

But as usual the entire conversation took place out of ear-shot; it was all over and the Bunnies gone by the time the twins arrived.

Wally was shaking his head as usual and trying to look disappointed.

"Don't know a thing!" he declared. "They say they know Grubby about as well as their own cousin—and by the way, the Scramble Squirrels *are* his cousins, did you know that? But they

don't seem to be able to tell me a thing about him. I'll run along ahead now and ask Chris Crow. If he doesn't know, nobody does, and you may as well return to Scrub-Up-Land and tell Mr. Rub-adub and his soap and water, I mean tell Mr. Rubadub, that Grubby can't be found."

Before Nancy and Nick could say a word, he was off again.

But the twins had decided by this time that they would do a little inquiring themselves, and no sooner had Wally departed for the old hickory-tree where Chris Crow made his home, than they wished themselves after him.

They landed on the *other* side of the tree, and being small (you see the shoes had made them very small in order to get into Mr. Woodchuck's house) neither Chris nor Wally noticed them. And this is the way they heard the dusty, tousley Woodchuck person ask that old fraud of a Chris Crow if he knew anything about Grubby Groundhog's whereabouts:—

"St! St! Oh, Chris!" went Wally.

Chris stuck out his black head. "'Lo!" he answered. "'Lo, Grubby!"

Mister Woodchuck put his hand to his mouth, "Sh! Not so loud!" he whispered. "Don't gimme away. There's two folks here from Scrub-Up-Land; Rubadub sent 'em for Grubby Ground-hog and they don't know I am that person. I told 'em I'd ask you if you knew Grubby and I ran ahead so they couldn't hear. They don't know that I've got two names, and they are looking for somebody who's fat. They don't know that I'm fat in the fall and lean in the spring. Also they don't know how I hate to get spring-cleaned. I'm so hungry I'd rather eat a good meal. The sass-patch garden is starting to come up and the wheat's green as anything. Now don't tell, will you?"

"Tee, hee," snickered Mr. Crow. "'Deed I won't, Grubby. That scrubbing business is no fun. And they *might* clip your tail crooked, like they did my wings."

Nick looked at Nancy and Nancy looked at Nick. What a lot they had discovered in the last few minutes!

Wishing themselves large enough to pull a certain tousled person along with them, Nick

took a firm hold of one of Grubby Groundhog's ears, and Nancy seized the other.

"Come along, Grubby," they commanded. "No more tricks, either. You've fooled us long enough. Everybody will like you better when you're clean. Then you may come back here and eat as much as you like all spring and summer."

And what could Grubby, or Wally, or whatever you wish to call him, do, but go?

NANCY GOT THE FAN AT ONCE.

CHAPTER XII: MR. SLEEPY WHATSHISNAME

"Who's this?" asked Rubadub, pushing his cap onto the back of his head and jerking his thumb at a creature all huddled up behind a stone.

Nancy and Nick came running.

"Looks like Mr. Fox," said Nancy, "his nose is so pointy."

"No," contradicted Nick. "Look at his ears! They aren't big enough for Fleety Fox. Mr. Rubadub, don't *you* know?"

Rubadub shook his head. "No, I don't. Never saw the gentleman before in all my life," said he.

"At least I don't think I did, but just wait until I get a good look at his tail."

The fairyman walked around to the other side of the stone where he could get a good view of Mr. Sleepy Whateverhisnamewas. Didn't I tell you that he was asleep? Well, I meant to and must have forgotten. 'Deed he was, as sound asleep as Rip Van Winkle's old dog Schneider. Only he didn't snore! Of course I don't know whether Dog Schneider snored or not, but no matter what *he* did, this fellow did *not* snore. He slept so quietly, and so movelessly, and so everythinglessly, that he might have been part of the stone itself.

"Well I just guess it isn't Fleety Fox," announced Rubadub with a wise wag of his head. "No more than I'm a Chinaman. You ought to see his tail!"

The twins stepped around where they could see. No wonder Rubadub was surprised, for there was the creature's tail sticking out, without a hair on it; really it was as bare as a flag-stick! 'N' you know what a hairy bushy tail old Fleet has. No, it most certainly was not Fleet Fox. Besides

Fleet doesn't go to Dreamland in the winter, even for a week's vacation. He is so afraid that he'll miss something—or someone—or a meal—that he snoops around all winter long, and the snow keeps him clean.

They do say that the underground road to Dreamland is most untidy, and as Fleet never goes he never gets dirty.

"It can't be Corny Coon, either," went on Rubadub thoughtfully, "for Corny has a tail like the brush in a carpet-sweeper, and it's as striped as a stick of peppermint-candy."

So there they were, just where they began, nobody knowing who the stranger was, or where he came from.

Rubadub and Nancy and Nick asked all the creatures in Scrub-Up-Land if they'd ever seen him, but nobody had, until the cuckoo-bird happened along. "I don't know his name," said the cuckoo-bird, thoughtfully cocking his head on one side, "but I'm sure I've seen him down South. I think he's the very fellow who asked me if I knew where there was a persimmon-tree. He

must have been hunting for a persimmon-tree and wandered in here by mistake."

"Either that, or when he saw so many of the birds coming from the South, he decided that there must be something special going on up North here and so he followed them," suggested Nancy. It was a long speech and a bright idea for such a little girl. Rubadub smiled.

"That's just exactly it," said he, "and the journey on foot has tired him."

"It's a long way to come just for a soap-and-water bath," said Nick.

"Oh, there's no doubt that he made a mistake," said the cuckoo-bird. "He meant to go to the Land-Where-Spring-Is-Coming, I suppose. Someone told him, likely, that there might be a persimmon-tree there."

Well, they all talked and talked and guessed and guessed about the strange creature, where he came from, where he might be going, and why he slept so soundly. For, through all the conversation, Mr. Whateverhisnamewas never batted an eye-lid.

"He's the very quietest sleeper I ever saw,"

said Rubadub watching him closely. "Why, you can't even see him breathe!"

The twins stooped and watched too. It was true. He was very different from all the sleepers

MR. POSSUM GOT THE SPRING-CLEANING OF HIS LIFE.

they had seen before, whose sides generally went out and in or up and down with each breath. He sort of reminded Nancy of her bisque doll, Jane, whose eyes closed when you laid her down. She never moved when she slept, but stayed in the same position, still and cold, until you picked her up again.

Suddenly Rubadub straightened and looked around with a worried expression. "You don't suppose he has—has fainted, do you," he asked.

Nobody knew, but they all gathered 'round closer, curious as could be to see what would happen.

"Maybe he has," piped up Markie Muskrat. "I'll tell you what our neighbor Dr. Mink said to do when folks fainted. He said to stand 'em on their heads and they'd be all right in a minute."

"H'm!" remarked Rubadub. "The best way to stand him on his head is to hang him up by his tail, I suppose. There isn't any doubt that there's something wrong with him; anyway it won't hurt to try."

Well, such a hoisting and struggling and straining and stretching as went on to get that fat old sleeper strung up by his tail to the lowest limb of a nearby tree! He must have fainted *very* hard, for he never moved the whole time. As Rubadub said afterward, he acted as limp as a dish-rag, and as dead as a door-nail all rolled into one.

But after a great puffing and pushing and

pulling, they managed to get His Sleepiness or His Faintiness or whatever his name was, strung up by the tail. Rubadub twisted it (the tail) 'round the tree-limb, and do you know, he never even had to tie it, for it stayed just where Rubadub put it without a knot or anything, just as though it had been accustomed to hanging onto tree-limbs all its life, the tail I mean.

"Now then, everybody!" said Rubadub, stepping back, "stand away and give him air. Nancy, you run and get a fan and fan him, and Nickie, you watch to see if he flickers his eyes. I'm going to look at my watch and see how long he faints."

Nancy got the fan at once and everybody took a turn fanning Mr. Whateverhisnamewas hanging up there by his tail. Nick watched his eyes for some sign of his waking, and Rubadub counted the seconds. But do you know, the fairyman got to a hundred, then to three hundred and still the creature didn't make a sign. He just hung there with his head down like an old coat hung upside down on a hook.

"Well, I never!" declared Rubadub finally,

putting away his watch and chain. "The harder you fan and the more I count, the sounder he sleeps. Really this is the faintest faint I ever heard of in all my life. There! There! It's no use fanning. Everybody stop. We'll have to think of something else. Here, all of you, help me unwind him and we'll lay him down again."

So with some more lifting and heaving and dragging and bumping, they got him down again just where he was before, and stretched him out on the ground.

"I know of something else 'ts good for faints," piped up Markie Muskrat again. "It's cold water. If you rub his hands and face and wrists with cold water, most likely that'll fetch him. Dr. Mink says it's a fine thing."

"All right, we'll try it," said Rubadub. "Nickie, run and get a bucket of cold water at once, and Nancy get some little white rags."

In ever so short a time the twins returned with all the things and everybody set to work again. Nancy wrung out her little cloths in the cold water and handed them 'round to everybody and

Mr. Whateverhisnamewas must have thought (if he could think at all when he was so fainty) that a nice cool spring shower had come along and found him without an umbrella. Nancy sprinkled water on his face and laid a cool cloth on his forehead, Mr. Rubadub laid another one on the back of his neck, Nick wet his feet and Muff Mole looked after his hands, Mark Muskrat wet his tail, and the other creatures sprinkled him all over. But not a bit of use was any of it! He slept on and on and on. Or I should say, perhaps, he fainted on and on and on.

"Does anybody know of anything else to do?" asked Rubadub.

Tillie Toad said she'd heard of smelling-salts, whatever that meant. So Rubadub hurried off to one of his cupboards and brought back two bottles. One was marked "Smelling Salts" and the other one was marked "Aromatic Spirits of Ammonia."

He poured some "Spirits of Ammonia" into a teaspoon and opened Mr. Whatshisname's mouth and let it (the ammonia) run down his throat. Then he held the smelling salts to Mr.

Whatshisname's nose, and waited. Everybody waited. In fact they'd all waited so long they were getting tired of waiting.

But Mr. Whateverhisnamewas didn't budge. He didn't wink or breathe or move.

Mr. Rubadub sighed. "I give it up," he said at last. "I think he must be dead."

"Goodness!" said Nancy. "Wouldn't that be too bad! Do you suppose he walked too far?"

Just then the cuckoo-bird who had started to fly away, came back and perched on the tree again, beckoning for the fairyman to come close. "Say!" whispered he. "I just happened to think of something. It never occurred to me until you said 'dead,' Mr. Rubadub, but I've been putting two and two together, and persimmon-trees and one thing 'n' another together, and I'm pretty sure that this Mr. Whatshisname here is a friend of a friend of mine, and he's very peculiar. Very! When he doesn't want to do anything or when he's afraid folks will do something he doesn't like, he can play dead better 'n' Fido, the trick dog. I'll bet you anything that we can wake him up!"

The cuckoo bird whispered the words into Rubadub's ear, just loud enough for Nancy and Nick to hear, but not loud enough for anyone else. And he went on telling them some other things that brought the smile back to Rubadub's brow.

"All right!" whispered the fairyman back to the cuckoo-bird. "I'll try it. You'd better stay here to see how it works." Then he called loudly, "Nancy, Nick, Markie Muskrat, everybody, come here!"

Everybody came crowding close.

"Now listen carefully," said Rubadub. "I guess that our friend here must be pretty sick. He's so sick that I'm afraid that we can't make him better, ourselves, so we'll have to send for the doctor. And we don't want the doctor to think that we don't know how to take care of a patient, do we?"

Everybody said he didn't want such a thing to happen.

"Well then," nodded Rubadub, "the most important thing of all in nursing is cleanliness. We must make the patient as clean as a soap-bubble

before the doctor comes. In order to do that, we must give him a good scrubbing with several kinds of soap, soap-suds, soap-powder, and soap-flakes. Now, who will go and get the soap?"

"I! I! I!" came several voices at once, each person clamoring to help. "I'll go. We'll all go."

"That's fine!" answered Rubadub. "Now listen to what I tell you."

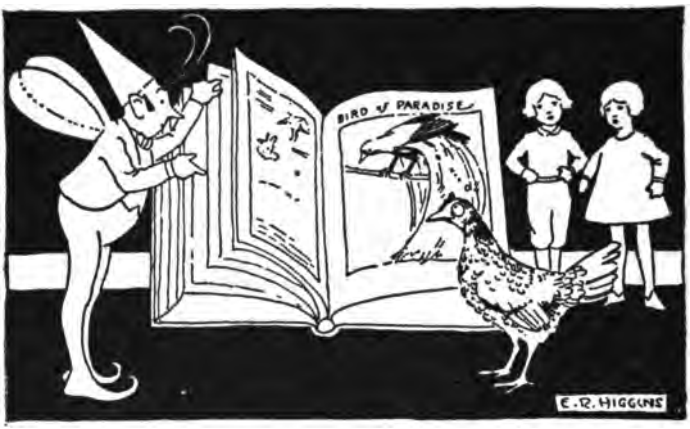
One by one they departed, even Nancy and Nick and the fairyman himself, leaving Mr. Sleepy Whatshisname still and silent behind the big stone.

But Rubadub and the twins only went a little way. They stopped and hid behind a tree trunk to see what would happen. And something did happen!

The sleepy creature who had caused so much excitement and commotion, or rather the creature who had pretended to be so sleepy, opened one wary eye, then the other, and looked around. Then he lifted his nose, then his head and his tail, and the very next thing wasn't he standing on all four feet, quietly peering in every direction. See-

ing nobody he started to grin. "Didn't I fool them, though?" he snickered. "Didn't I have the whole kaboodle of them completely hoodwinked! But I'd better be going before they bring all that soap-powder 'n' soap-flakes 'n' stuff. I've no intention of getting the nasty stuff in my eyes and mouth and nose, and don't you forget it. Next time Mr. Philander 'Possum follows the birds and comes to a place like this, you'll know he's losing his mind. I guess I won't go North at all. I'll just slip out of the gate and go South again. I haven't seen a single persimmon-tree since I left home."

With that Mr. Philander 'Possum (for that's what Mr. Sleepy Whatshisname's name really was) started for the gate, but Rubadub and the twins were too quick for him. They stepped out and stopped him, and as all the others returned just then with forty kinds of soap and some more water, Mr. 'Possum got the spring-cleaning of his life. He still tells the story to his grandchildren, with many chuckles, as a good joke on himself.



"THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT I WISH," SAID THE BROWN BIRD, HAUGHTILY.

CHAPTER XIII: THE BIRD OF PARADISE

ONE day Rubadub, the fairyman, came into the tailor-shop where Nancy and Nick were working for very dear life on Will Woodpecker's gorgeous new spring clothes. His red cap and neckerchief were most becoming and Will was trying to look as modest as he could, although he couldn't resist peeking out of the corner of his eye once in a while at himself in the mirror.

Rubadub had a very mysterious look on his face, and tiptoed softly, with his fingers on his lips as though they were not sufficient to keep back the important news that was trying to get

out. Jerking his thumb back toward the door he said under his breath, "A *very* important person is here! Very! No other than the Bird of Paradise. She wishes to get her spring clothes made."

When he came in looking as mysterious as a penny prize package, the twins had put down their brushes and crayons, and waited with bated breath to hear the wonderful news he had to tell.

"Huh!" said Nick now, in a disappointed tone, quite impolitely, I'm afraid. "I never heard of her. Who's she?" And he picked up a sharp little file to make Will Woodpecker's bill just the right shape for hammering on the trees. And Nancy said, "Is that the yellow stuff they wear on hats?" And she started chalking Will's white wings to make 'em still whiter.

"Such remarks!" said Rubadub shocked. "I'm perfectly amazed. But after all perhaps it's little wonder that you know so little about her Highness. Birds of Paradise don't belong in our country, but live many thousands of miles away. That is why it is so unusual and such an honor to have this lady select us to fix her up. Especial-

ly as she is the most beautiful bird in the whole world. She's a most particular friend of the Fairy Queen."

"Why doesn't she come in?" asked Nancy curiously.

"Sh!" cautioned Rubadub. "Not so fast! She wouldn't even let me have a good look at her, but hid in a doorway and talked to me through a crack. She says she's most exclusive and doesn't like to be stared at."

"All right," said Nick not greatly impressed. "We'll start on her when we get Will Woodpecker finished."

"Let Will wait," said Rubadub, "or go the way he is, and hunt up your best feathers and paints. I'll get you the "Best-Bird-Book," too, so you can't make any mistake about this important customer. And she's in a hurry, too, so shoo out all these other birds and I'll show her in."

There was a general hubbub at that, of course, and I wish you could have heard some of the remarks that went around when the birds heard they were to be side-tracked for this beauty. But finally they were all out of the way, and the twins

and the fairyman got busy hunting out all their finest materials. There were wonderful feathers that Rubadub said he had been saving for umpty-some years, for occasions such as this, paint of the loveliest rainbow shades, silver powder, gold powder, and what not! For the Bird of Paradise you must know, children, just as Rubadub said, is the grandest bird in all the world. Indeed Nancy and Nick nearly lost their breath when the fairyman showed them her lovely picture in the "Bird-Book."

Next they lowered all the shades, for Rubadub said she had asked especially to have it dark, and when everything was ready the fairyman opened the door.

And in walked the stranger!

Of course the light was very dim but there was quite enough of it to see that the visitor was certainly not so gorgeous as her picture. Really she was quite plain, being dressed altogether in dull brown.

The Magical Mushroom took a good look at her and then whispered to Nancy that to his mind her name might as well be Bird of the Barnyard,

as Bird of Paradise, and he was also about to say some more uncomplimentary things, when the lady herself apologized. "I've come a long way, so of course I just wore my traveling clothes," she said. "But when I return, no doubt the weather will be quite fine, so I may wear my new gown home. Can you begin right away?"

Rubadub bowed and said that they could and would, and showing her the picture in the "Best Bird-Book," asked if that were the kind of a dress she wished. He brought it quite close so she could see plainly.

"Y—y—yes!" gasped the brown bird. "Is that really and truly the Bird of Par——" And then, quite haughtily, "Oh! I mean, that's exactly what I wish. You may begin at once."

Well, everybody got busy at once primping up the little brown bird. First of all they painted her bill a lovely sky-blue (just like the picture), then they colored her feet an exquisite pink (also like the picture). The feathers on her back and sides and breast they made white and gold and purple and green, and then fastened long, grace-

ful, orange-colored plumes below her wings. (All just like the picture.)

Last of all they shook gold and silver powder over her and fastened a strip of velvet about her

"ME, BIDDY HEM," SAID THE MOST DISHEVELED CREATURE YOU EVER SAW.

throat, which finished her off completely. Behold what a gorgeous creature the little brown bird had become! Cinderella changed into a princess!

"Now come over and see yourself, please," said Rubadub proudly, leading her to the mirror. "Do you like your new gown?"

"I—is that really me?" she cried, when her

own bedecked image met her eyes. "Oh, oh, oh! I'm surely the grandest creature alive, now. I mean," hastily, "it feels better to have one's best clothes on."

And then, as is the way with the "newly rich" often, she grew suddenly haughty again.

"Open the door!" she commanded sharply. "How do you expect me to half see in this awful gloom?"

"But you said the light hurt your eyes," Nick reminded her.

"Well, what if I did?" she snapped. "They're better. Good gracious! Do I have to explain everything I do?"

"My! my!" The Magical Mushroom shook his head soberly. "Some people certainly do change their manners with their clothes, don't they!"

"Oh, do stop talking so much," answered Mrs. Bird of Paradise wearily, "and show me how to hold up my train. I must be going at once."

"Oh, don't you know how?" asked the wise old Mushroom quickly, winking at Rubadub. "Besides, you don't need to hold it up when you fly."

"Fly!" gasped the bird. "Did you say fly? Why, I never flew a step in my life, and I'm not going to begin now."

"Just as you like," waved the other, as though it were of no importance to him. "Only I believe it's customary in Paradise, I mean among Birds of Paradise."

Rubadub began to get awake then. "I declare!" he said with great interest. "Will you please tell me how you ever got here from away over on the other side of the world, if you can't fly. You surely didn't walk all the way, did you?"

Mrs. Bird of Paradise tossed her head and walked right out without answering, dragging her lovely plumes behind her—those exquisite feathers Rubadub had been saving for so many years 'n' all. And her pink feet! It was dreadful to see them tracking through the mud. Everybody jumped.

"Oh, let her go," said the Mushroom. "I know a thing or two about Birds of Paradise, and I also know a thing or three about chickens. Just

see if she isn't back by to-morrow." And he smiled a wise smile.

"Shall we follow her?" asked Nancy and Nick eagerly. "Perhaps we can help her."

Rubadub shook his head. "No, I think not; she'd only think you were interfering. The only way to do with some folks is to leave 'em alone."

But the Mushroom was wrong. The Bird of Paradise didn't even wait until the next day. That very evening the door opened a crack, and a head looked in; a head with one eye swollen, and all the feathers on it, the head, not the eye, sticking out forty ways for Sunday.

"May I come in?" asked a meek voice.

"Sure!" cried Rubadub, opening the door wider. "Who is it?"

"Me, Biddy Hen," said the most dishevelled-looking creature you ever saw. "Would you mind taking all this stuff off and making me over into a plain chicken again? Nobody at home knows me, and they won't let me in. I'm 'most starved, and I'm tired to death. These old feather dusters trip me at every step, and Cockadoodle, my husband, called me a trollop.

Oh, dear, why was I ever so silly as to wish to be beautiful?"

"Handsome is as handsome does," Rubadub comforted her.

"I reckon you're right," she sighed, "but I've brought up five families, and no one ever asked me for my photograph yet."

Everybody got to work then, and took off all the ruined finery, and Mrs. Biddy Hen went home to her family, a sadder and wiser bird.

"COME ON," CRIED NANCY. "WE'LL HAVE TO STOP THIS RUMPUS."

CHAPTER XIV: CASPER CATBIRD DISAPPEARS

THE next person to be spring-cleaned in Scrub-Up-Land was Casper Catbird.

Now Casper didn't like water, being related to the cat family, or perhaps it was because his colors were so dark that he had never felt the need of a bath. With his black and gray coat I've no doubt he thought washing all nonsense.

But his top-knot did need combing, there wasn't a doubt, and his necktie was always creeping up around his ears. Oh, yes, Casper needed looking after, and Nick and Nancy called to him

to come to the barber-shop as fast as he could, and take his turn.

But no Casper came, not a feather of him, and neither did he answer to his name. So they searched for him everywhere, behind the doors, under the empty paint-pots, on top of the ladders and outdoors, too. But there wasn't a sign of him.

Suddenly there was a terrific rumpus from somewhere, quarreling and scolding, as though every creature in Christendom had a grievance and was airing it. Evidently some one had called Mr. Frog names, and he was answering back. "You're dumb," he croaked, "you're dumb, you're dumb!" He acted awfully mad.

Then another voice shrilled a denial. It sounded exactly like Biddy Hen. "I'm not at all, I'm not at all!" she cackled. "I'm just as smart as you, I'm just as smart as you, I'm twice as smart as you!"

"Stop your fussing, aren't you ashamed!" came the oriole's voice.

"Why? Why? Why?" wondered the killdeer.

"Caws! Caws! Caws!" thundered Chris Crow.

"I'll tell the cat! I'll tell the cat!" threatened Mrs. Hen again.

"Me-ow-ow!" came the cat's voice instantly.

"Boo-woo-woof!" barked Don the dog.

"Give him fits—fits—fits!" shrilled Sid Song Sparrow, in great excitement.

"Whoo?" demanded Mr. Owl, while Bill Blackbird scolded his rusty Chk! Chk! Chk! to show he was right there when there was trouble.

"Come on, Nick," cried Nancy. "We'll have to stop this rumpus before we hunt for Casper Catbird.

"But I can't understand it," said Nick in a puzzled voice. "Why should Sid Song Sparrow come back? He's been gone a month. And you know Mrs. Hen was here twice yesterday, but she's gone, too. So are Bill Blackbird and Chris Crow? Isn't there room to quarrel, if they want to, in the Land-Where-Spring-Is-Coming without returning here? It's very queer, don't you think?"

"Yes," confessed Nancy. "It is. Perhaps

we'd better get Rubadub and the Mushroom to help us. There they go again!" And the rumpus started all over. "You're dumb, you're dumb, go home! For shame, for shame, go home!" croaked Philip Frog. "I shan't do it, I shan't do it," cried Biddy Hen. "Sad, sad, what a tale!" exclaimed Sid Sparrow. "Chk, chk, chk, chk, chk," giggled Bill Blackbird and the whip-poor-will offered his usual advice. That was followed immediately by Bob Bobolink saying the same thing almost, "Spink, spank, sping," which probably means, "spank, spank, spank," in bird language. "Whoo, whoo?" inquired Oscar Owl, at once.

"Oh, dear, where can they all be?" cried Nancy. "I can't see a single one of them."

All this time, of course, Casper Catbird was getting out of taking his bath, for while the children were hunting for the quarrelers to stop the trouble, they couldn't be bothered searching for him. And you can imagine that Mr. Casper was just about tickled to pieces.

The twins found the fairyman very busy trimming the muskrat's whiskers, while the Magical

Mushroom was giving Snoopy Skunk a lesson on manners.

Rubadub looked up when the others came in, in a surprised way. "Well," said he, "will you tell me what you've been sawing so much wood for? You'd think winter were coming instead of spring."

The twins looked at each other perplexed. "Why, we haven't been sawing any wood," they said. "We've been——"

"There it is again," interrupted the fairyman.

Everybody listened. Yes, sure enough, there was no mistake about it, some one was sawing wood quite plainly. It went, "Z-z-z-zh-zh-sh-sh-sh-z-z-z," just like any old saw you ever heard. It was most astonishing, for there wasn't another soul in Scrub-Up-Land except themselves, and the animals and birds, of course, couldn't do such a thing.

But suddenly that stopped and the sounds of quarreling started again.

"That's what we came to tell you about," cried Nick eagerly. "How can all those birds come

back here, when they've been away, some of them for a month?"

A wise look came into Rubadub's eyes, but he said nothing except, "Whose turn is it to get spring-cleaned?"

A SMALL GRAY FIGURE TALKING AND SCOLDING WITH THE VOICES.

"Casper Catbird's, Mr. Rubadub," Nancy told him.

"And have you got him?"

"No, not yet. When we started to search for him all the fussing started, and we thought we'd better stop it first. But we don't know where

to go. We can't tell where any of the sounds come from."

"Exactly!" nodded the fairyman beckoning, "Ex-act-lee! Come on, we'll search for whomever we can find. I don't think it will be very hard to catch the offender—I mean offenders."

"Here's one now," called Nick in a minute, pointing to Philip Frog, snoring peacefully under a burdock.

"But he's asleep," smiled Rubadub, "how can he be making so much racket?"

It was true. Phil had no more idea of quarreling than I have at this minute, and I'm feeling pretty friendly indeed! Mysterious, wasn't it?

On they went, following Rubadub, and all the while getting nearer and nearer to the noises. Sometimes the quarreling would stop and the sawing would begin—the two sounds never happening at the same time.

Pretty soon the fairyman put his finger on his lips, and began to tippety-tiptoe, which meant for everybody to be very quiet; and the little Green Shoes could slip along with no noise at all, let me tell you.

Nearer, and nearer, and nearer, they came to those dreadful noises which sounded as though a whole cageful of wild animals had broken loose —almost.

Then they came to a tree! And what do you suppose? The sounds were all in the tree! Very quietly Rubadub pulled down a thick branch! And the sounds all came from the branch! And just as softly, he separated the leaves, and whom do you think they saw? A small gray figure talking and scolding to himself, for dear life—with *ten* voices. Mr. Casper Catbird!

Rubadub caught him before he knew what he was about, and the noises stopped at once. Casper hung his head guiltily, and well he might, don't you think?

"These children don't know that you are the mocking-bird's first cousin," said Rubadub sternly, "but you can't fool all of us. Now what shall I do with you, sir?"

"Give him two baths!" suggested the Magical Mushroom, slyly.

And they did.

RUBADUB CALLED THE TWINS AND THE MAGICAL MUSHROOM TO HIM AND HELD A COUNCIL.

CHAPTER XV: THE EASTER BUNNY

SPRING was getting along pretty well by this time. Since Jack Frost had sneaked off to his home at the North Pole, or in the sky or wherever it was he lived, and let the fairy helpers work unhindered, they had worked more busily than bees in a clover patch; and with all the katkins out, the fuzzy buds on the alders, little red blossoms on the maple-trees, and green buds blanketing all the bushes and shrubs, the Land-Where-Spring-Was-Coming looked like the Fairy Queen's private bower.

Robin Redbreast had started to build his nest in the old maple-tree, Belinda Bluebird, too, had set up housekeeping in her usual quarters in the "sickle-pear," relining her old nest in the hole half way up, with soft bits of hair and down, spied out on the ground by her sharp little eyes.

Bill Blackbird squawked creakily from the budding beech-tree, and Chris Crow across the field kept up a constant complaint about Farmer Smith being so slow in his corn planting. But even so, he was happy. How could he help it with the whole world bursting into gorgeous bloom, and perfume and song? Happiness was in the air and you had to breathe it, whether you willed or no. Besides Chris was one of those people who are so afraid of being caught happy, they pull a long face to hide it, not fooling anybody but themselves.

But don't think, my dears, that the sparrows and woodpeckers, bluebirds and robins were the only nest builders, or Mrs. Squirrel either; although it's a fact that she was making soft pinky-blue somethings or other and folding them away in balsam, and Mrs. Bunny, too. And

I'm sure they weren't Christmas presents for anybody.

But there were still other nest builders. Indoor ones! Little chubby nest-builders, who scampered up to attics and searched for bright-colored baskets (or at least they had been bright a year ago) and then, when they found them, scrubbed them up and tied on bows and tiptoed into the best parlor and hid 'em—and tiptoed out again!

Knowing this and taking a squint at his calendar, Rubadub called the twins and the Magical Mushroom to him and held a long council.

"It's time for the Easter Bunny," he announced. "High time! He's due in the Land-Where-Spring-Is-Coming the day after to-morrow."

"But," said Nancy, "he isn't here yet. We can't clean him up when he isn't here!"

"No," smiled Rubadub, "but he will be. Don't think he ever forgets when the kiddies are expecting him. He's on his way now from Dreamland. Anyway, what's the matter with getting

the eggs ready for him—and the candy chickens, and bunnies?"

The twins clapped their hands. "Oh, that will be grand! Do you really do all that in Scrub-Up-Land, Mr. Rubadub?"

"Who else, if I don't?" he replied.

"And do please tell us how he carries everything," they coaxed. "Is he like the Magical Fox who rode the Prince on his tail?"

"Now how could he do that when he hasn't any tail to speak of!" exclaimed the fairyman in surprise. "Certainly not. The fairy helpers go along in thousands loaded down like Santa Claus. They open the windows and unlock doors, and find the nests, and presto! in the morning the kiddies find wonderful things. Of course the Easter Bunny knows where everybody lives and takes charge of everything, but since the world has got so big, he *has* to have help."

"How-do-you-do, everybody," said a cheery voice just then, and turning they beheld the Easter Bunny himself smiling in the doorway. He was in high good-humor, and said he was very glad to meet the twins. "Fine weather," he

went on, rubbing his paws together, "fine and clear and Easterish. I think we owe it all to our young friends here, for going to see Mr. Sun and having him chase that fellow Jack Frost." And he again turned his friendly eyes on Nancy and Nick, who thanked him delightedly.

"Anything ready?" he inquired, looking round with a business eye.

"Not yet," apologized Rubadub, "but we are just going to commence on the chocolates."

"I'm glad I got here in time," said the Easter Bunny nodding wisely, "to tell you not to make too much sweet stuff."

Rubadub raised his brows. "H'm!" he said. "Sugar? Scarce?"

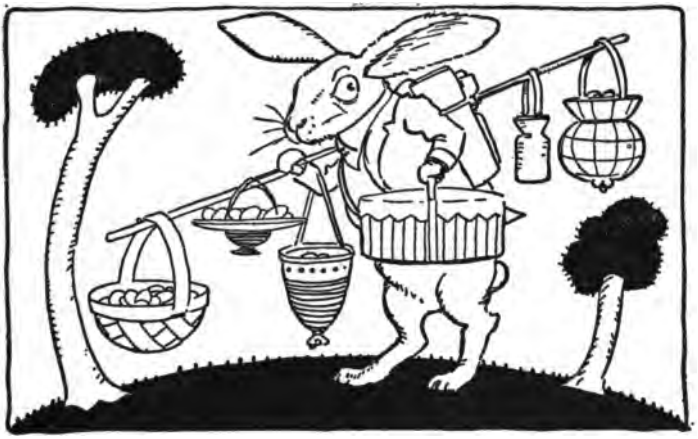
"No!" answered the Bunny. "Stomach-ache! Plenty!"

Then they both laughed.

"Well, that's too bad!" said the fairyman, shaking his head. "The kiddies all have such a sweet tooth. I hate to disappoint 'em."

"Oh, I don't mean to be stingy with them, the dears," said the Easter Bunny hastily. "I certainly mean to give them enough sweets for one

tooth, but when they've got a whole mouthful of sweet teeth it invariably means the doctor. And isn't it queer, but I never knew a child of them with a castor-oil throat?"



THE EASTER BUNNY HIMSELF WAS LOADED WITH SO MANY BASKETS THAT HE LOOKED LIKE A MARKET TRUCK.

"What would you suggest, then?" asked Rubadub, worried like.

The Easter Bunny took a bundle of papers out of his pocket and spread them on a table. "Here are some new ideas," he said. "Patterns for downy chicks and ducklings and goslings and rabbits—very artistic and warranted to give sat-

isfaction. The Fairy Queen's own idea! Got plenty of cotton?"

"Oodles!" answered the fairyman, which in every-day language means "a great deal."

Well, everybody got to work right away, the Easter Bunny himself tying on an apron and pitching in.

Eggs were dyed every color of the rainbow, and some with fancy figures of birds and flowers on top. Little peeps with yellow bills and beady eyes were turned out by hundreds, and little ducks that looked so real, you feared they were about to rush for the water. There were sugar bunnies, however, in spite of all the "Easter Bunny's" warning. Rubadub said that if he knew children, they would rather take a chance on the doctor, than do without a sugar bunny. So sugar bunnies there were—lovely ones of all sizes with beads of white icing festooned deliciously all over them. And jelly beans! Millions of them to put inside the make-believes whose heads came off.

And last but most important of all, were the wonderful crystal eggs with pink fluting and a

sugar rose, and a little window in the end, where you put one eye and saw shepherdesses tending sheep, and milkmaids leading bossies through brooks.

Everything got finished finally, the last job being to dye green paper and straw grass for the baskets, and then the making of the baskets themselves! For of course sometimes Easter-baskets get lost from year to year in the attic, and so of course the Easter Bunny has to take a *great* supply. A very great supply!

At last everything was ready, and the Easter Bunny made a most elaborate toilet for the trip. His brown coat was beautifully brushed and his white waistcoat laundered until it glistened like snow. Oh, the elegant fellow was quite a dandy, particularly when Rubadub tied a red satin cravat round his neck.

Then the fairies came buzzing from their duties in the forests and meadows and gardens in the Land-Where-Spring-Was-Coming, eager to help with the baskets of goodies that were to bring joy to so many little hearts. The Easter Bunny himself was loaded to the eyes with so

many baskets that he looked like a market-truck.

Away they all went then, when Mr. Sun had gone to bed and thousands of pairs of little eyes had closed dutifully in the Land-Where-Easter-Was-Coming. The little fairies flitted along through the twilight with their mysterious burdens to be left stealthily behind parlor-curtains and dining-room chairs and even under beds, where little bare feet would run pattering to hunt for them in the morning.

Rubadub looked after the fairy helpers and the Easter Bunny, then turned to Nancy and Nick and suggested that they take a vacation. "Suppose," said he, "that you go home for Easter. I can get along in great shape until Monday. Besides, you know, you mustn't ever come to help me when your parents might need you, or when you're to have a holiday."

"Oh, they never miss us at all!" said Nancy. "They like us to play outdoors in the meadow and this is quite as near, you know."

Another thing Nancy didn't think about. Fairy days and hours are quite different from our days and hours. So it was altogether likely

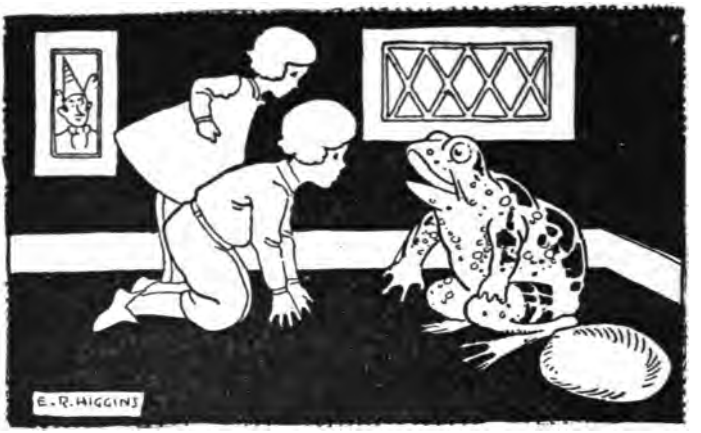
that the children hadn't been missed for an instant.

But the Green Shoes took them home right away, setting them down in the Green Meadow near the house. That night when their mother came in, ever so softly, two little figures were tucked cozily away in bed, with eyes shut tight.

She kissed them good-night and patted their tousled heads tenderly. "Tired out," she whispered, smoothing the covers. "Busy little people!"

Wasn't she right, though! And at that, she little guessed how hard they had been working.

Never mind! Their reward was waiting for them downstairs, hidden snugly away behind the portieres in the hall. At that very minute something went lippety-lopping down the path to the gate. The figure could be plainly seen in the light from the living-room windows, had any one thought to look. It was brown and glistening white and—could it be possible—there was a dash of scarlet. It looked almost like a red satin bow.



PHIL DIDN'T MOVE A STEP.

CHAPTER XVI: PHIL FROG GETS TAILORED

MANY birds and animals were still in Scrub-Up-Land waiting to be spring-cleaned. So of course Nancy and Nick hurried back the very first minute they could get away.

Rubadub was so glad to see them he almost cried, at least he blew his nose quite loudly, but it may have been because he didn't know of anything else to do.

Nancy tied on her apron, and Nick rolled up his sleeves and looked around.

"What is there to do now, Mr. Rubadub?" he asked, waving a greeting to all the creatures crowding round to welcome them.

"Let's see!" cried Rubadub, "Oh, yes, there's one fellow who should have been out of here weeks ago, but strange to say he doesn't seem to mind whether he goes out or not. Like Casper Catbird, he's disappeared and I can't find him. It's Philip Frog."

"Why!" exclaimed Nick. "Don't you remember, he was sleeping behind the door when we were hunting for Casper. Perhaps he's there yet."

"Never thought of it!" declared the fairyman, brushing out Corny Coon's tail, and telling him to "begone and good luck." "That's exactly where he is. Come on and we'll find him right away."

Away they all trooped to the door behind which Phil lay peacefully snoring with his head on a little white pillow. "Yes, sir, there he is," said Rubadub, pointing toward the sleeper in an exasperated sort of way.

Nick tiptoed over close to Phil's ear, and yelled, "Boo," as loudly as he could, which was pretty loud.

Phil smiled broadly in his sleep, a wide sweet

smile, and murmured drowsily. "That's lovely, Miss Pollywog! Simply lovely! Would you mind singing that last beautiful note again?"

The twins were very much astonished at such an answer. At first they thought Phil was playing a joke on them, but another loud snore proved the contrary. Nick gave him a little poke —no, a good-sized poke—and shouted at the top of his lungs, "Wake up, you! Hey, wake up, I say!"

It was really quite loud enough to waken the park monument, but the sleepy fellow merely turned over and smiled more broadly than ever, murmuring dreamily, "Oh, adorable creature! How I love the touch of your soft hand! Such wonderful tenderness! Won't you sing that exquisite melody to me again?"

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Rubadub, looking around the crowd to see how they took it. "Singing pollywogs! Adorable creatures! Soft hands! Humph! Either Mr. Frog must have a double case of spring-fever or else he's been eating pie and cheese before going to bed, to make him dream like that. Wait! I bet I can

wake him up, and I won't throw cold water on him, either." And going close to Philip's ear he yelled, "Flies! Flies! Blue-bottle flies!" as loudly as he could.

That got him. Phil sat up and blinked his eyes, smacking his lips expectantly.

"Is it really fly-time?" he beamed. "Good old fly-time! I'd no idea I'd slept so long. Why, I haven't seen a fly since papers were a penny. Where am I?" he asked yawning and stretching. "This isn't Lily Pond, is it, or Ripple Creek?"

"No indeed!" said Rubadub, "you look as though you hadn't seen water for ten years. You're as shabby as an old shoe."

"Shabby!" exclaimed Phil, looking down at himself in surprise. "Why, so I am! I must have got it down in the mud on the road to Dreamland where I stayed all winter. I remember of waking up for a little while, but I must have gone to sleep again. Now I can't remember anything."

"This is Scrub-Up-Land," Nick told him. "You probably came to get spring-cleaned, didn't you?"

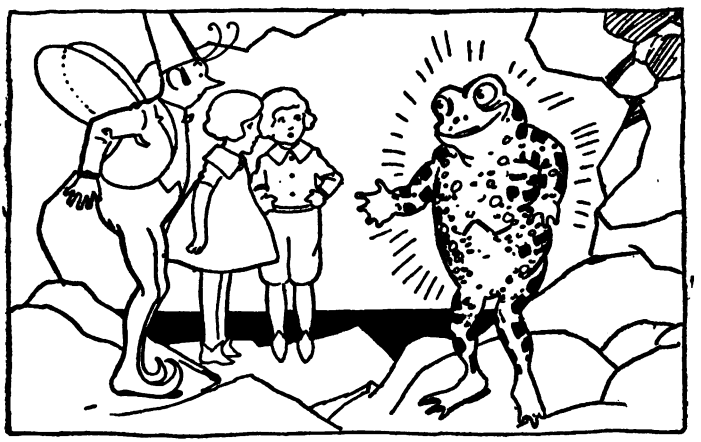
"Maybe!" Phil nodded. "But I don't see why, when I know how to spring-clean myself."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Rubadub. "That's good, Philip. I suppose you think that all you have to do is to leap into Lily Pond and you'll be as clean as a blade of grass. Perhaps you will, sir, but how about your last year's suit fading? It's as brown and spotty as an autumn leaf, and wrinkled, too. All the water in Lily Pond and Ripple Creek and even Briny Ocean couldn't make your coat bright and green as it used to be, nor whiten your vest. What you need is a good laundry and some expert dyers, like Nancy and Nick here. Also a good tailor like myself. At your service, sir!"

"Expert dyers!" grinned Phil, blinking at the twins with his sleepy eyes. "Perhaps they are, but didn't you know that I am the original dyer myself. It was I who invented the beautiful shade of bull-frog green so popular with my friends. And as for tailoring, I don't know of any one who can make coat and breeches to fit like I can."

Rubadub lifted his eyebrows in surprise. "Then why did you come here?" he asked.

"I must have made a mistake," answered Phil. "When I left Dreamland I was scarcely awake



"HOW COULD YOU DO IT?" HE CRIED, "WITHOUT ANYTHING TO WORK WITH."

and when I started to hop toward the Land-Where-Spring-Was-Coming I probably turned to the left instead of to the right, being too sleepy to read the signs."

The fairyman was thoughtful for a minute. "H'm!" he said aloud. "Your case is most unusual. Most! I hardly know what to do. If

I let you tailor your own clothes, and you make a poor job of it, what will happen if I let you go to the Land-Where-Spring-Is-Coming? People will be sending letters to the Fairy Queen saying that I turned out some of the animals in disgraceful condition, and would she please get a new tailor and laundry-man and dyer for next year. Then what could I do for a living? Fairy jobs aren't so easy to get as people imagine."

Philip laughed and laughed at that, a deep, good-natured rumble. "I tell you what I'll do," he said. "If I don't do it right, I'll let you do me all over again. That's fair, isn't it? Besides, look at the work I'll be saving you."

Rubadub nodded reluctantly. "All right," he consented. "See what you can do, although why you are so anxious, I can't see."

"Nancy, you show Mr. Frog where the soap and starch are," said Rubadub. "And you, Nick, show him where the irons and ironing-board are, and the thread and needles in the tailor-shop. I'll go with you myself to the dye-shop to fix up your coat. Come along!"

But Philip didn't move a step. "I'll go with

you a little later," he put them off. "Just now I'd like a little time to myself, if you don't mind, to sort of think things over. I haven't got wide-awake enough yet to do a thoroughly good job, I'm afraid; suppose I call you when I'm ready."

"Very well!" said Rubadub as they all moved toward the door, "but mind you don't go to sleep again, sir, you're late enough as it is."

After they had closed the door, Philip became suddenly active. He wasn't a bit sleepier than you are at this minute, unless it's bed-time, and if that's the case you probably aren't sleepy at all.

He peeled off his clothes, his old wrinkled brown ones that Rubadub said looked like an autumn leaf, and lo and behold, didn't he have underneath the loveliest, freshest, pale-green spring suit you ever saw on a frog, and not a wrinkle in it. Phil looked fully ten years younger. It was a case, almost, as Bill Blackbird had said, of "fine feathers making fine birds," only as frogs have no feathers, of course it was more correct to say, "Fine skins make fine frogs."

And then he did the most remarkable thing,

which showed how hungry poor Philip was. He swallowed his old clothes, lining, buttons, pockets, and all. Whether he had indigestion afterwards or not I can't say, but if he did, he most likely took a dose of arrow-root bitters, which is so bad that any one taking it immediately forgets that he has a pain.

Rubadub and the twins hadn't taken twenty steps when the door opened and Philip called after them.

"Ha!" exclaimed Rubadub, turning suddenly, as much as to say, "I told you so. Have you changed your mind, Mr. Frog?"

"No, I've changed my clothes," answered Phil.

The fairyman gasped, then hurried back, scarcely able to believe his eyes. "But how could you do it?" he cried, "without anything to work with? You didn't know where the needles or anything were."

"Oh, grinned Phil. "I carry my own things, besides didn't I tell you I was an expert tailor? When once I make up my mind to do anything, it's done and that's all there is to it."

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Rubadub, while Nancy and Nick looked on with big eyes, not saying a word.

"I may as well be going now, I guess," said Phil, moving toward the door. "The early frog catches the flies, you know. Good-by, everybody."

They all said good-by, then, and Mr. Frog hopped off to the Land-Where-Spring-Was-Coming, taking his secret and his old clothes with him.

NANCY PINNED THE LITTLE PILLOW ON THE CLOTHES-LINE.

CHAPTER XVII: THE LITTLE SILK PILLOW

WHEN Philip Frog had disappeared in the distance, Rubadub said he'd better be looking after Marty Martin and that Nancy and Nick could be fixing up Bobby Blue Jay. Bobby was getting impatient, although I don't know why. He seldom troubled to make his own nest, and generally waited until Robin Redbreast settled, then helped himself to Robin's house as coolly as you please. He was even meaner than Mr. Blue-Bird, who let his wife do the nest-making herself, and never offering to lend a hand!

But anyway, Nick went off to find him, and Nancy was about to follow when she happened

to notice the little white silk pillow upon which Phil Frog had been lying.

"My!" she exclaimed, picking it up and dusting it over her knee. "You're very dirty. Mr. Frog knew a comfortable spot to sleep when he found it, didn't he? No wonder he wanted to stay here and dream on until fly-time, but he's left half of his mud on you, poor thing."

She shook the pillow and brushed it and did what she could to get the dirt *all* off, but some way the little pillow didn't look quite clean. Suddenly Nancy had an idea. "I know what I'll do," she cried, "I'll hang you on a line and beat you with a stick like Mother does when she cleans house. She says that Mr. Jolly Sun can do more for pillows than all the cleaning in the world."

It was queer, but when Nancy said "beat" the little pillow gave a wiggle and nearly fell out of her hand. Nancy looked at it curiously but decided that she was imagining things. Why should a pillow care whether it were beaten or not?

"Come on," she said, starting for the clothes-

line. "After you're sunned and properly beaten, I'll let Bobby Blue Jay carry you to the Land-Where-Spring-Is-Coming so that all the birds can divide you up and make mattresses for their babies. It's so hard for them to get cotton and wool bits, that I'm sure that silk is almost unheard of. Won't they be happy!"

At this the little pillow gave such a jerk that it fell from her grasp completely and landed at her feet. As Nancy stooped to pick it up, she heard a funny sound and looking up she saw the Magical Mushroom snickering fit to kill.

"I don't see what there is to laugh at," she declared crossly. "Just because this silly pillow keeps jiggling out of my hands. You're both queer," she declared, jerking the pillow up again and starting off for the line, "but I promised Mr. Rubadub to help, and if cleaning up his pillows isn't helping, please tell me what is?"

Quite some words for sweet, good-tempered little Nancy who loved everything and everybody but who did not like to be laughed at, especially when there wasn't a thing that was funny. The Magical Mushroom straightened up at once

and followed her, looking as solemn as an owl, but there was still a merry little twinkle away down in the corner of one eye, if you got close enough to see it, and had a spy-glass!

Nancy pinned the little pillow on the clothes-line quite securely with a whole row of clothes-pins, for if it could flop so easily right out of her hands she decided it must be a very unusual pillow and needed to be fastened tight.

All the while Mr. Magical Mushroom was watching and never saying a word, but by this time there was a twinkle away down in both eyes. Nancy wished he would go away and not stand around so much, especially when he wasn't helping anyway, and I'm afraid that as she stooped to pick up a good stout switch she made a face at him.

When we're cross at anybody, we usually take it out on something or somebody else. And so, being cross at her fairy friend, the little girl gave the little silk pillow a great whack with all her might right in its plumpest part, and another and another and another.

Suddenly she realized that sounds were coming

from the pillow, and she stopped with her arm in midair. "Ouch! Ouch! Ouch!" it was crying. "Please stop, and I'll come out as fast as I can. I didn't mean to be so slow. I'll hurry, really I shall, if you'll only please wait."

"Goodness!" cried Nancy, dropping the switch, almost too surprised to speak. "W—what is it? Who is it?"

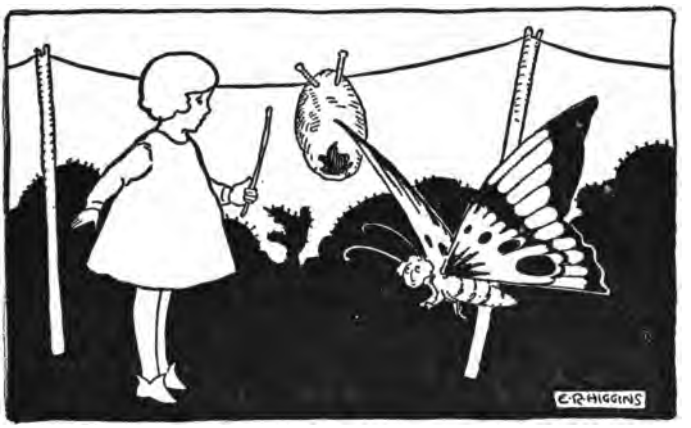
"I'll tell you in a minute, just as soon as I get my head out," answered a voice, "only do please send Mr. Blue Jay away first."

"He isn't here," the little girl assured whomever it was inside the pillow, "so you may come out whenever you wish. There's nobody here but the Magical Mushroom and he won't hurt you."

The twinkle in the Mushroom's eyes had deepened to a smile, and Nancy glanced at him remorsefully, feeling that she had been wrong to get so cross.

Just then there was a tearing sound and a head poked out of a hole at the end of the pillow, a head with two great beady black eyes, which looked around anxiously as though to make sure

that Nancy was entirely right about Mr. Bobby Blue Jay. "Here's part of me," nodded the head, in a friendly way. "The rest of me is coming soon, just as soon as I can get untangled.



"OH, YOU BEAUTIFUL BUTTERFLY!" EXCLAIMED NANCY.

These threads are wrapped around me all sorts of ways."

Then slowly an arm stretched itself out, then another arm, and then, a long slim body pulled itself out with difficulty. Lastly came a couple of legs and the creature dropped to the ground leaving the little pillow-slip flopping flat and empty on the line.

"Are you Crawly Caterpillar?" wondered Nancy while the little creature was stretching and stretching itself to get the kinks out.

"I was last year," nodded Crawly that was. "But I've changed my name."

While he was speaking four long thin wings that had been folded tightly together against his sides, began to unfold, and to Nancy's amazement spread out from his shoulders, blazing with the most gorgeous shades of orange and purple and blue and gold.

And now the Magical Mushroom laughed outright.

"You beautiful butterfly!" exclaimed Nancy, her eyes as big as saucers. "I never dreamed it was you. Oh, I'm so sorry I hurt you. I didn't mean to, really; oh, please forgive me!"

The butterfly waved his wings a few times to see if he knew exactly how to use them, then fluttered up to the very line where he had been imprisoned in his little white cocoon. "Oh, that's all right," he said graciously. "It scarcely hurt a bit. I cried out because I was afraid it was going to hurt—that's all. You see the silk was

thick enough to protect me. And after all, it was a good thing you woke me up, for I was sleeping too long. Wouldn't it have been dreadful if I'd slept through all the lovely spring and summer and never wakened until Jack Frost pinched me next winter. Br-r-r——!" And the butterfly shivered at the thought.

"If you don't mind, I'll be off now to dance around the flowers in the Land-Where-Spring-Is-Coming and sip the sweet honey from the flowers. I'm very hungry indeed. I hope the coast is clear and that the birds aren't snooping around waiting for me. They're hungry, too, likely!" And he shivered again. "How about Bobby Blue Jay?"

Nancy assured him that Bobby wasn't near, and he could make his way safely to the gate.

So away fluttered the gorgeous creature, waving them good-by with his wings.

Nancy unpinned the empty pillow-slip and threw it over her arm. "I'll take this to Bobby anyway," she said. "The birds can still use it for mattresses for their babies, and he may as well take it along."

"WE CALL IT FLOWER POLLEN," INSISTED NICK.

CHAPTER XVIII: A QUEEN IN A VELVET CLOAK

NANCY had painted the wake-robin and violets and Nick was finishing the May-flowers, coloring the tiny petals a beautiful shell-pink and waxing the smooth green leaves, then sprinkling over the blossoms some drops of Fairyland Fancy Perfume.

They were working hard, as Rubadub was anxious to get through so he could clean up the shop and lock the gate of Scrub-Up-Land until next year.

Nearly all the birds had gone to the Land-Where-Spring-Was Coming, the bobolink, gold-

finch and kingfisher having left some time ago, also the meadow-lark and wood-thrush. One after the other had spread his wings and soared away happily to hunt for a place to build his nest.

And then a stranger arrived.

No one had seen her come, although Rubadub said afterwards that he heard a tremendous buzzing, so that likely she had traveled by motor. But no one could be sure of that. The *first* any one knew of her presence was when Nick looked up and saw her sniffing and snuffing at the flowers.

"Hello there!" called the little boy, "who are you?"

The newcomer, who was only about as big as a lima bean (out of its shell), looked up sharply.

"Please don't say 'hello' to me," she said grandly. "I'm not accustomed to it. I'm a queen," and then she returned to her sniffing. The sniffing and snuffing had got so loud by this time, however, that it sounded more like buzzing than anything else and Nancy drew back in alarm. Especially as the proud little person had

a black and yellow striped velvet cloak and clear gauzy wings. She really looked ever so much and sounded ever so much like Mrs. Bee. "What should we say?" asked Nick very respectfully this time on hearing how important she was, "I never talked to a queen before."

"That's very evident," she said absently, stopping to take a little sip of delicious juice out of an arbutus-cup. "The proper thing is to bow and bump your head upon the ground three times, then say, 'May I speak to you, oh Queen?' And if I nod my head you may continue like this: 'It's a fine morning, this morning, isn't it, oh, Queen?' And whether or not it is a fine morning depends entirely upon the way I am feeling. Now, do you want to practice, both of you, so you'll know how to treat royalty hereafter when you meet it?"

The twins supposed they did, so they began at once doing exactly as the little creature told them, bowing low and bumping their heads and "Oh, Queening" to everything. But when they came to "It's a fine morning this morning," the other declared that it wasn't at all. That it

wouldn't be fine weather until the clover blossoms were out, and that's what her errand was about, in Scrub-Up-Land, to see if she couldn't hurry things up a little and get the clover sent right away to the Land-Where-Spring-Was Coming.

"So far," said she, "there isn't a thing worth tasting. How long will it be before honeysuckle-time?" and she buzzed hungrily.

"It's about the last," announced Nick. "Honeysuckle is always in bloom about rose time, I think. But if you'll wait, I'll ask Mr. Rubadub."

"Oh, never mind," said the visitor peevishly. "If I can't have it right this minute, I don't care when I get it. But now that I'm here, I'll have you dust me up a bit, for my velvet and gold cloak is very much travel-stained from my long journey. Come here, little girl, and take my things, will you?"

She said it kindly enough but Nancy couldn't help shivering again. She did wish the Queen didn't look quite so much like Mrs. Bee. But she took the little bags her Majesty handed her, quite bravely.

There were three of them, and one had needle points sticking out, which Nancy was very careful not to touch. "Most likely a sewing-bag," she tried to say to herself, as she laid it aside.

"What is your last name, oh Queen?" asked Nick impulsively. "Or don't queens have last names, same as other folks?"

"Oh, yes, they do," answered her Majesty. "But generally royal people are known by their first names. *My* name's Avis. You may call me Queen Avis."

"Then, oh, Queen Avis, will you please turn around slowly, until I brush your velvet cloak, oh, Queen Avis?"

But at the very first stroke such a cloud of yellow powder flew in every direction that the children had to sneeze.

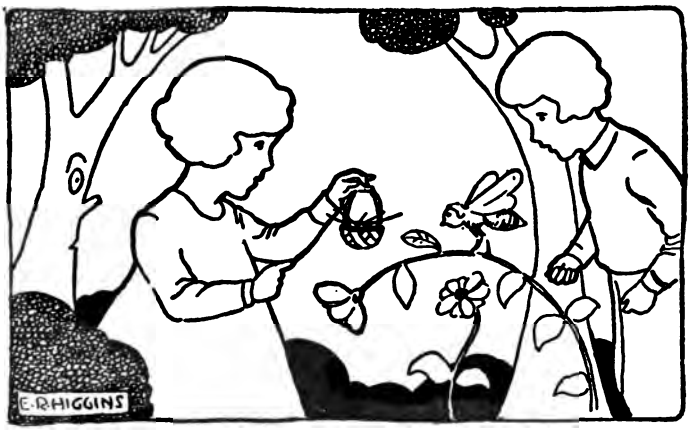
"Th—that smells like flower-pollen," said Nick, sneezing again. "We put a pinch of it into every blossom, oh Queen!"

"No, it isn't," she answered. "It's pollen-flour."

"We call it flower-pollen," insisted Nick, brushing some more with his very best whisk-

broom. The children both sneezed again, but her Majesty only looked annoyed, either because of the sneezing or the contradiction, or both.

"What do you make bread out of?" she asked suddenly.



"LITTLE GIRL, IF YOU HAND ME MY SEWING-BASKET, I'LL BE GOING."

"Flour," answered Nancy promptly.

"Ha!" she cried, triumphantly. "Didn't I say so? the yellow powder in flowers is used to make bee-bread for the bee babies, so of course it's pollen flour."

Nancy was wondering suspiciously how she happened to know so much about bees, when

Rubadub came along. Hearing the last of the argument, he exclaimed, "Flower-pollen is pollen-flour and pollen-flour is flower-pollen, just the same as chocolate-drops are drop-chocolates." Which settled it.

Finally the brushing was finished and Her Majesty looked as bright as a gold dollar. She glanced at herself proudly in the mirror and buzzed her approval.

"Thank you," she said graciously. "The next time I need a new supply of pollen-flour, I'll send some of my workers instead of coming myself."

"Workers!" cried Nancy before she knew it. "Bees have workers, oh Queen!"

"Bees! Bees! Bees!" exclaimed Her Majesty impatiently. "Certainly they have. But aren't bees all right? Why don't children like them? They make most excellent honey to put on your bread and butter. Tell me, don't they?"

Everybody said they did 'n' everything, only——

"Well," said the little lady, "I must be going. My people will be wondering where I am, besides they won't swarm, settle I mean"—she corrected

herself hastily—"until I show them where my kingdom is to be this year. Now, little girl, if you'll hand me my honey-bag, and flour-sack and my sewing-basket, I'll be going. That's it, thank you. And, little boy, will you please look around and see if Sleeker Swallow is out of the way? He's my worst enemy and I can't start until he is safely out of the road."

Nick told her the coast was clear, so away she buzzed exactly like a motor, out of the gate of Scrub-Up-Land and off to the Land Where-Spring-Was-Coming. At the gate she stopped for an instant to wave farewell.

"Write to me some time," she called. "You'll find my address in the dictionary under the A's."

"I think," said the Magical Mushroom, wisely, "that you'd be quite as sure, children, to find it under the bee's. That was Mrs. Queen-Bee herself."

"AM I TOO LATE?" ASKED SLEEKER ANXIOUSLY.

CHAPTER XIX: SLEEKER SWALLOW'S EVENING CLOTHES

SCRUB-UP-LAND was pretty empty by this time.

Rubadub was beginning to lock up cupboards and put things away for next year; the paint brushes had been cleaned, paint-pots covered, glue-bottles stoppered, scrubbing-buckets and tubs turned upside down, and rags hung up to dry. The animals, birds and flowers had nearly all gone to the Land-Where-Spring-Was-Coming, the only ones left being a few slow in drying, or a stray bug or two which had forgotten something and come back.

Nancy and Nick were rolling down their sleeves and getting ready to go home, for the Magical Mushroom said it was so beautiful and warm and green now in the Green Meadow, that they must get back and have some romps. The Green Shoes said they were ready to go at a moment's notice, and it looked as though the children would be saying good-by to Rubadub for a year, very shortly, when there was a rushing of wings and in flew Sleeker Swallow in his evening clothes. And, mind you, it was morning.

"Am I too late?" he asked, anxiously, when he had got his breath. "I didn't realize that time was going so, and here I've been playing out on the ocean, having the most fun grabbing things off the top of the water. It just occurred to me that it must be time to get spring-cleaned, so here I am. Have the dandelions gone yet?"

"Yes, they went yesterday," nodded Rubadub.

"My, my!" exclaimed Sleeker. "I should have gone then, too. People always look for us together. Have the bees gone?"

"Mrs. Queen-Bee went yesterday, too," answered the fairyman.

"Then I shall have to hurry," cried Sleeker. "I do love bees so."

Nancy thought it queer that he should like them so well when she distinctly remembered Queen Avis as saying that she didn't wish to come across Mr. Swallow on her way home. But suddenly she caught a greedy gleam in the bird's eye, and she *knew*. If he looked so hungry when he just *said* bees, how would he look and act when he *saw* them?

But he changed the subject.

"I wish to speak about my clothes," said he, in a complaining tone. "Here I am all dressed up like a society person, when I'm not one at all."

"Tut, tut!" said Rubadub, shaking a finger at him.

"Well, I don't care!" said Sleeker, crossly. "I'm not a dickey-bird, living in a gold cage, taking baths in a gravy dish, and eating seeds out of a vase."

"Your clothes look very nice," said Nick, walking around him admiringly.

Sleeker shrugged his well-tailored shoulders. "Nice! That isn't the question. Does your

Daddy wear his party clothes, if he has work to do in the barn? That's where I live mostly, and up under the roof at that, in a mud-house. Imagine me carrying mud in this rigging!"

Nick had to acknowledge that it did seem out of place, especially Sleeker's shirt front.

"Yes, just think of it," said Sleeker. "But that's not the worst. Some of my family live in a chimney and when I go to visit them you should see me! Does a chimney-sweep put on an elegant black broadcloth coat and a fine waistcoat before going to work? No, he has better sense.

"Another thing! I spend so much of my time on the water, it must look queer to people to see me tearing around with my coat-tails sticking out behind straight enough to play marbles on. Does a sailor go about in such a costume, I ask you? Does he? He does not." And Sleeker Swallow looked disgusted.

"H'm!" said Rubadub. "H'm!" Then he shifted and said "H'm!" again thoughtfully.

Nancy got out her scissors.

"What's that for?" asked Rubadub.

"To cut off his coat-tails," answered Nancy kindly. "He doesn't like them."

"Not so fast," advised Rubadub, "I'll have to think about it first."

Then evidently he made up his mind more quickly than he intended, for he added, "All right. Go ahead, Nancy. We'll give this chap his wish and put on a pair of loose overalls. I think myself that he'll be better dressed for the things he has to do. The only thing is that we're closing, and if he changes his mind, like Mrs. Hen and Ben Bunny and Scramble Squirrel, he can't come back to be done over. He'll have to wait until next year."

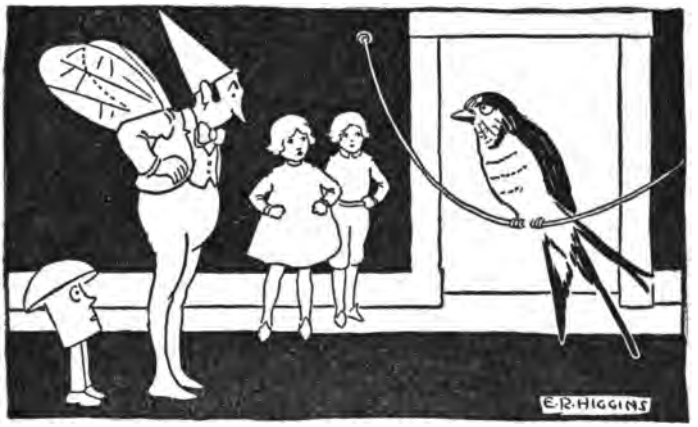
"Oh," cried Sleeker, delightedly, "I'm sure I won't change my mind. How can I ever thank you enough, Mr. Rubadub, for giving me my wish?"

"By being satisfied," answered the fairyman. "Come on into the tailor-shop and we'll rig you up a pair of overalls right away. And that suit you've got on, we'll put away in camphor-balls until next year."

"Oh, just throw it away!" said Sleeker, care-

lessly, slipping out of his coat and tossing it aside.

There was much snipping and cutting for a while, but not much fitting, for everybody knows that overalls only fit where they touch you, and



"HOW CAN I EVER THANK YOU ENOUGH?" CRIED SLEEKER DELIGHTEDLY.

as they mostly don't touch you, they don't fit at all.

Sleeker hitched the straps over his shoulders delightedly, and stepped out as proud as a peacock. "Now," said he, "I feel like home folks." And he sized himself up in the very same mirror in which Mrs. Hen had admired the Bird of Paradise.

"Well, good-by, people," he said happily, looking toward the door and out toward the gate beyond, where the road to the Land Where-Spring-Was-Coming lay bright and shining in the sun. "I think I'll be going. Shall I see any of you this summer?"

"Oh, yes," said the Magical Mushroom. "But be sure you call to us, for we'll never know who you are in your new clothes. We've been in the habit of looking for your long coat-tails for so many years we'll be apt to forget that you are Sleeker Swallow."

A cloud came over Sleeker's face. "My goodness!" said he. "I hope I'm not going to lose all my friends. It's no use having friends when they don't know you."

"Oh, don't worry until the time comes," comforted Rubadub. "I believe in folks having what they want as much as possible. And I'll report to the Fairy Queen exactly how it was that you wished new clothes. I'm sure she'll understand."

"Thank you!" said Sleeker gratefully. "Well, good-by again," and flapping his wings, he flew out of the door. But as he passed it he bumped it awkwardly, and two or three times on his way

to the gate he turned a complete somersault.

"What's the matter with him?" the twins asked Rubadub.

"The air gets under his loose clothes and upsets him, just the same as if you'd put a bag over the body of an aeroplane," announced the wise fairyman, looking up for the last time. Then he lifted Sleeker's suit off the ground and folded it carefully.

"Shall I sleep here to-night?" offered the Mushroom just then, when Rubadub had hung the key to the tailor-shop on a big nail outside the door.

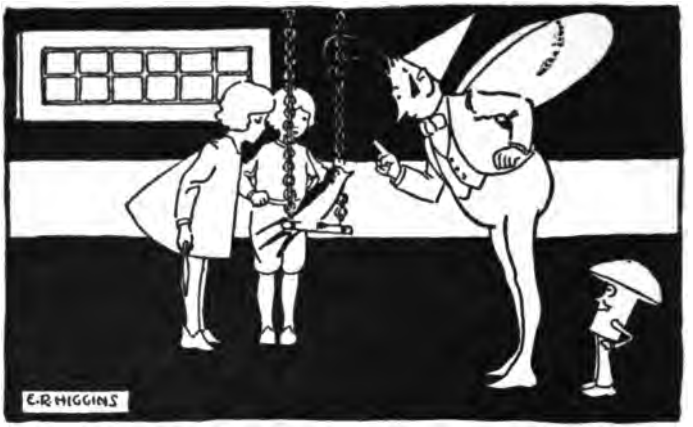
"No," said the fairyman, looking at his watch. "You'd better take the children home, and I'll stay."

"But," cried Nick, "I thought you were all through. Everybody's gone!"

"Do you really think that last chap won't be pounding at the gate at sunrise?" asked the fairyman in surprise. "Did you think he was gone for good?"

"Yes, sir!" said the children, still wondering.

"Well then, you haven't learned as much about people as I thought you had," returned Rubadub.



"I WON'T MISS A BUG AGAIN THIS YEAR."

CHAPTER XX: SPRING AT LAST

THE fairyman pulled out his pipe and sat down to have a smoke, after Sleeker Swallow had gone. "It's the first I've had for some weeks," he sighed contentedly, knocking the ashes out onto his hand and blowing through the stem to see if it were clear.

"Now you kiddies, run along with this chap," he said, nodding at the Magical Mushroom. "He'll take care that you reach home safely, and that you don't lose your Green Shoes. I won't say good-by, for I'll probably be meeting you at the Fairy Queen's Palace some of these days,

now that you know the Magical Mushroom. I predict your adventures have just begun. But there's one thing you may do for me if you will."

"Oh, yes, of course we'll do anything for you, dear old Mr. Rubadub," cried Nancy, throwing her arms around the fairyman and hugging him tight.

Rubadub was so surprised he dropped his pipe, and when he stooped to pick it up, off went his hat, and it was some time before he got settled again. "I'm not so old," he smiled. "I'm only a hundred. The other fairies think I'm scarcely grown up yet. You see in fairyland we grow young instead of old. I'm a hundred years young."

Nancy and Nick had no answer to this surprising statement, and Rubadub laughed. "Don't mind my foolish talk, kiddies. But I'm glad you want to do something more for me. I sort of thought I'd worked you to death and you'd be wanting to get away. Would you, will you, go after that foolish swallow and see what becomes of him? If it were not for his silly

notions, we'd have been out of here long ago. Now I've got to wait and see what happens."

"Certainly, we'll go," they promised quickly, and without wasting time, Nick asked the Green Shoes to take them after Sleeker at once, and in a trice the trio were in the Land-Where-Spring-Was-Coming, under the edge of a straight high cliff.

The children looked around in surprise for they had expected to be deposited in their own dear meadow or orchard or forest, where most of their little bird and creature friends lived, but here was a place entirely new to them, a valley with high steep sides, full of rocks and stones with low bushes and grass growing between.

"Don't you think the Green Shoes have made a mistake?" Nick whispered to the Mushroom.

"No, they never do that," answered their companion. "Just be patient and you'll soon know the reason they have for bringing us here."

Scarcely had the words been spoken when Nancy whispered softly, "Oh, look!"

Came flapping up the rocky valley just then the queerest looking creature. At first the chil-

dren thought he was Oscar Owl, being so shapeless and bulky and bumping into things, the way Oscar had of doing; but he kept darting after objects in the air, bugs probably, which Oscar never thought of doing in daylight, not being able to see. Besides he was much too small for an owl, the latter being quite a ponderous fellow.

He came nearer and nearer, not seeing the strangers, until suddenly Nick cried, "Goodness! It's Sleeker Swallow himself!"

So it was, poor Sleeker in his overalls, not looking any more like his old neat self than a clothes-pin looks like a darning-needle.

Then he spied them and came flapping to a branch quite near.

"My, did you see that?" he panted as he almost lost his balance, and struggled to get it again. "I nearly went on my nose." He pretended to chuckle, but he didn't look quite happy about something.

"Say!" said he, "these clothes you gave me must be hoodooed."

"Why?" asked the Mushroom, looking hard at the overalls to see what hoodooed might mean.

"It's queer," said the bird, "but I used to be the best hunter in the world. I was so smart I never had to sit down to get my dinner, I just spotted a bug or a moth in the air and snap! he was mine. And bees! Oh, boy!" Sleeker used a bit of slang to express his feelings.

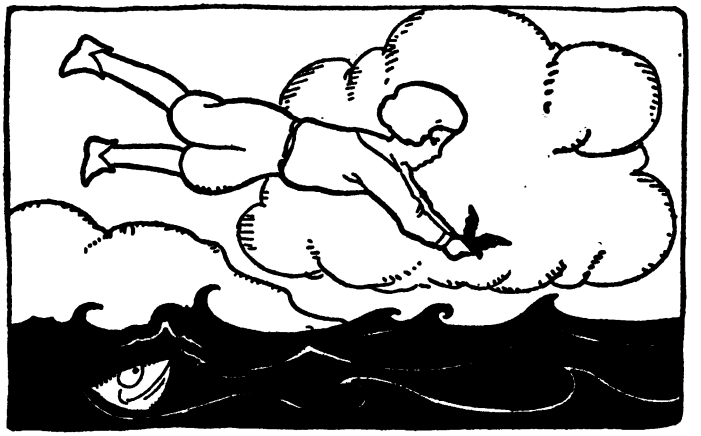
"But wait until I tell you," he went on. "Since I came from Scrub-Up-Land, where you changed my tight clothes for these things, I can't catch a thing. I chase and chase until I'm exhausted, but the bugs get out of my way before I can get them. I think the wind gets into these loose togs and holds me back." Sleeker sighed. He really looked very thin.

Suddenly he straightened up and squinted toward the cliff. "Ha, I know what I shall do!" he cried. "Some of my favorite berries grow half way up! I'll go and get some at once. Funny I never thought of that before. Good-by, I'll be back soon," he called. "Just as soon as I get my dinner."

But he was back sooner than he expected to be.

The children and the Magical Mushroom watched him trying to cling to the steep wall

where the red berries hung, but not a foothold could he get. Worse still, his lovely stiff tail feathers, which he always dug into the rough places to hold him up, were gone, too, along with



POOR SLEEKER WOULD HAVE PERISHED IN ANOTHER SECOND IF NICK HADN'T GRABBED HIM.

his fine "evening-suit" as he called it, and he couldn't stick on long enough to get one bite. Back he came looking hungrier and more sorrowful than ever.

"Perhaps if you visited your chimney relations you told us about," suggested Nancy, "they could give you some dinner."

"I did," he nodded, "but just as I was about to eat, I lost my balance and fell down into Mr. Man's stove. The ashes nearly choked me and I'd an awful time getting out alive.

"I haven't built my home under the barn eaves yet, either, as I'm too weak to carry the mud. I've a good notion to go to sea and stay there. I sort of look like a sailor anyway in these loose clothes, so I guess that's where I belong. Good-by, everybody. Here I go."

And Sleeker flapped away toward Briny Ocean.

"Quick!" cried the Mushroom. "We'll have to follow him, children, as Rubadub wishes us to keep an eye on him."

The Green Shoes then whisked them off through the air to a low sandy beach which curved around a sheltered bay. The sun shone brightly on the water and the breeze ruffled it into tiny waves; sea-gulls circled slowly, darting down now and then for a hapless fish come too near to the top for his own safety; and tiny bugs and insects winged near to the water.

But, was that a gull, that awkward, flapping,

rolling creature, trying to catch something close to the waves?

"It's Sleeker Swallow again," exclaimed Nick recognizing him at once. The children and their fairy friend watched him trying his best to get a meal, usually such easy sport for this skillful hunter. They had watched him other summers skimming over Lily Pond and it was hard to believe that he was the same bird.

Suddenly something happened. The breeze, playing with the waves, had rolled them higher and higher, and one with a little white cap on top, caught Sleeker as he swooped for a dainty bite, and pulled him into the water.

"Oh," screamed Nancy, "he'll drown. Save him, somebody."

"Our Shoes!" cried Nick quickly, wishing himself out where his little feathered friend was struggling.

Just in time, too! Poor Sleeker would have perished in another second if Nick hadn't grabbed him and wished them both on dry land again.

"Goodness!" sputtered Sleeker, catching his

breath. "That's no place for me either, I guess. I suppose I'll just have to go hungry. My! I wish——" But he stopped forlornly. "There's no use wishing; Scrub-Up-Land is closed and Rubadub has gone. It's all my own fault, though, so I mustn't complain. My old clothes, I see, were for a special purpose. They were just right to fly and climb in, and I didn't have sense enough to know it. Thank you for saving my life, though, Nick. It's a good thing you people happened along, isn't it, for where should I be now? I'll go back and see if my chimney relations can keep me for the rest of the season, and next year I'll ask Rubadub for my old clothes again. Do you think he's thrown them away, as I told him to do?" Sleeker looked anxious.

"No, indeed," said Nancy. "He is saving them for you, and we are going to take you back to Scrub-Up-Land right away, so you may put them on, and take these horrid clothes off, that you wanted so much."

So the Green Shoes whisked the four of them off in an instant, and to Sleeker's joy and de-

light, there was Rubadub smoking his pipe peacefully by the gate, reading the *Gossamer Gazette.*

"Hello, folks!" called the fairyman when he saw them. "Come right in, Sleeker. I know what you're after, so you needn't tell me. Here are your old clothes newly cleaned and pressed. Changed your mind, did you?"

"Oh, give 'em to me quick," cried the swallow, throwing off the clumsy new overalls with Nick's help, and slipping into his despised "evening clothes" as though he'd found his fortune. "I've learned sense at last, Mr. Rubadub. I guess you and Mother Nature, who gave me the duds in the first place, know what suits me best. Now for a good square meal. I can fly like an aviator now and I'll bet you I won't miss a bug again this year. Good-by, everybody, and thanks awfully."

Away he flew as straight as an arrow.

Rubadub emptied his pipe then, and, locked the big gate.

"Good-by," he nodded, turning to the children and shaking hands, "until next year. And

thank you for everything. You're very good children and you've been a wonderful help. I'll ask my friend the Magical Mushroom about you often. Good-by, again, kiddies!"

Suddenly there wasn't any Rubadub at all, nor a gate, nor even a nail with a key on it. Moreover, there wasn't any Magical Mushroom, nor any Green Shoes, for they, too, had gone back to the Fairy Queen's Palace. Nancy was about to say, "Oh, Nickie, how shall we ever get home?" when her eyes fell on the big stone. They were in the meadow with the big chestnut-tree spreading overhead, rustling with bright green leaves and ringing with the songs of hidden birds. And the meadow was green, and the orchard and the woods were green, and flowers with bright little faces were nodding to them from the grass.

"Oh!" smiled Nancy, looking at her brother. "Don't you see, Nick? We're in the Land-Where-Spring-Has-Come-at-Last!"

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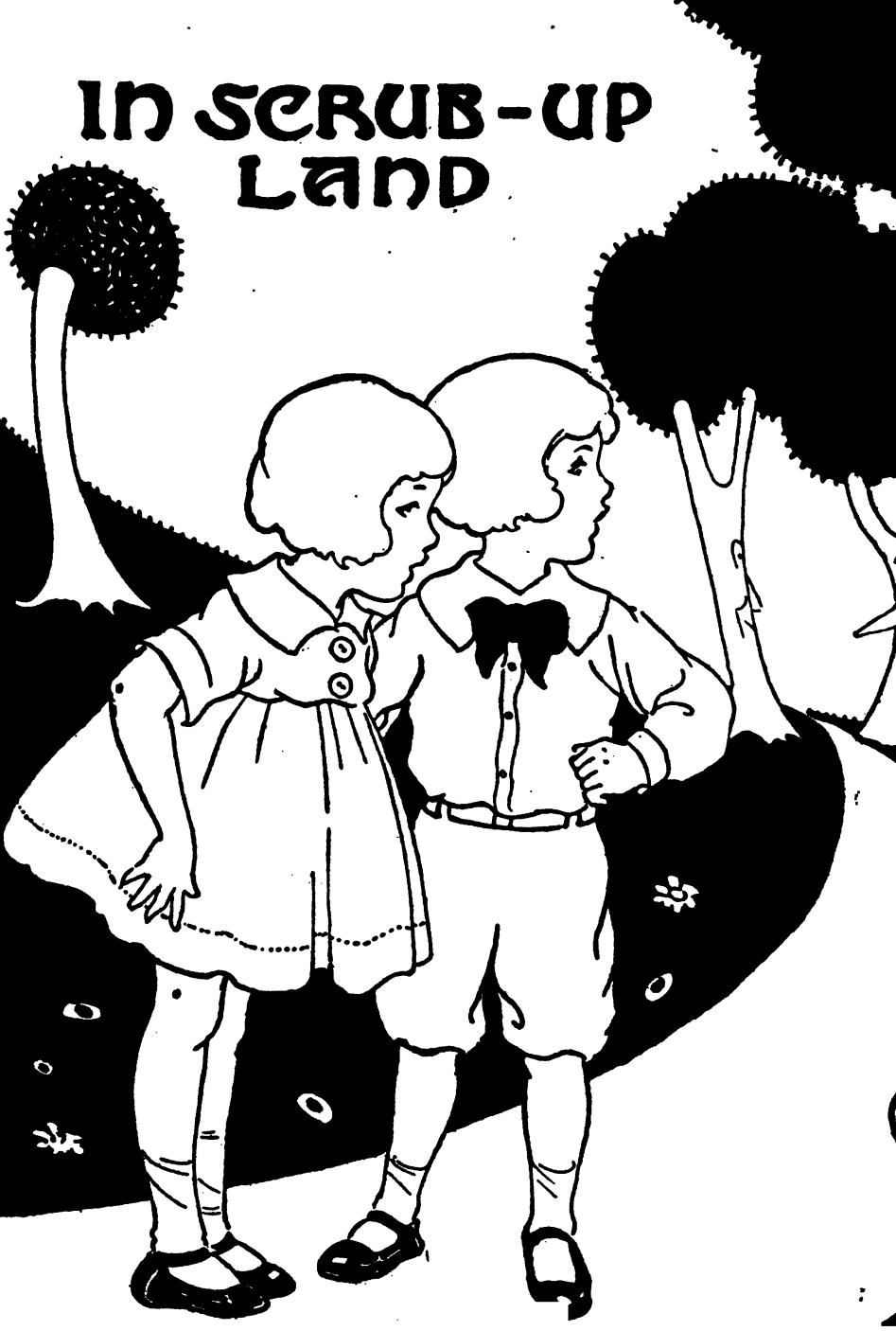
In Scrub-up Land



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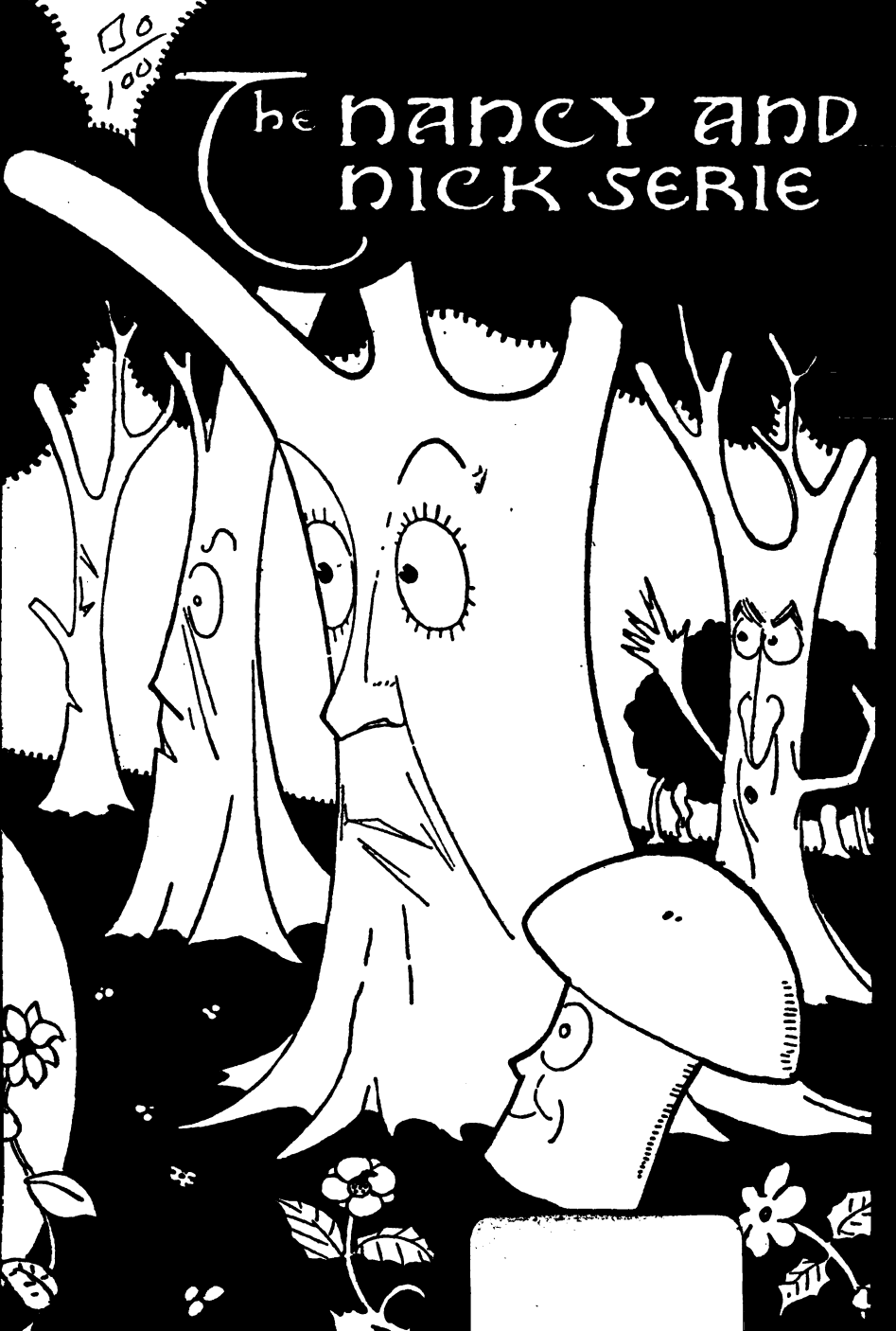

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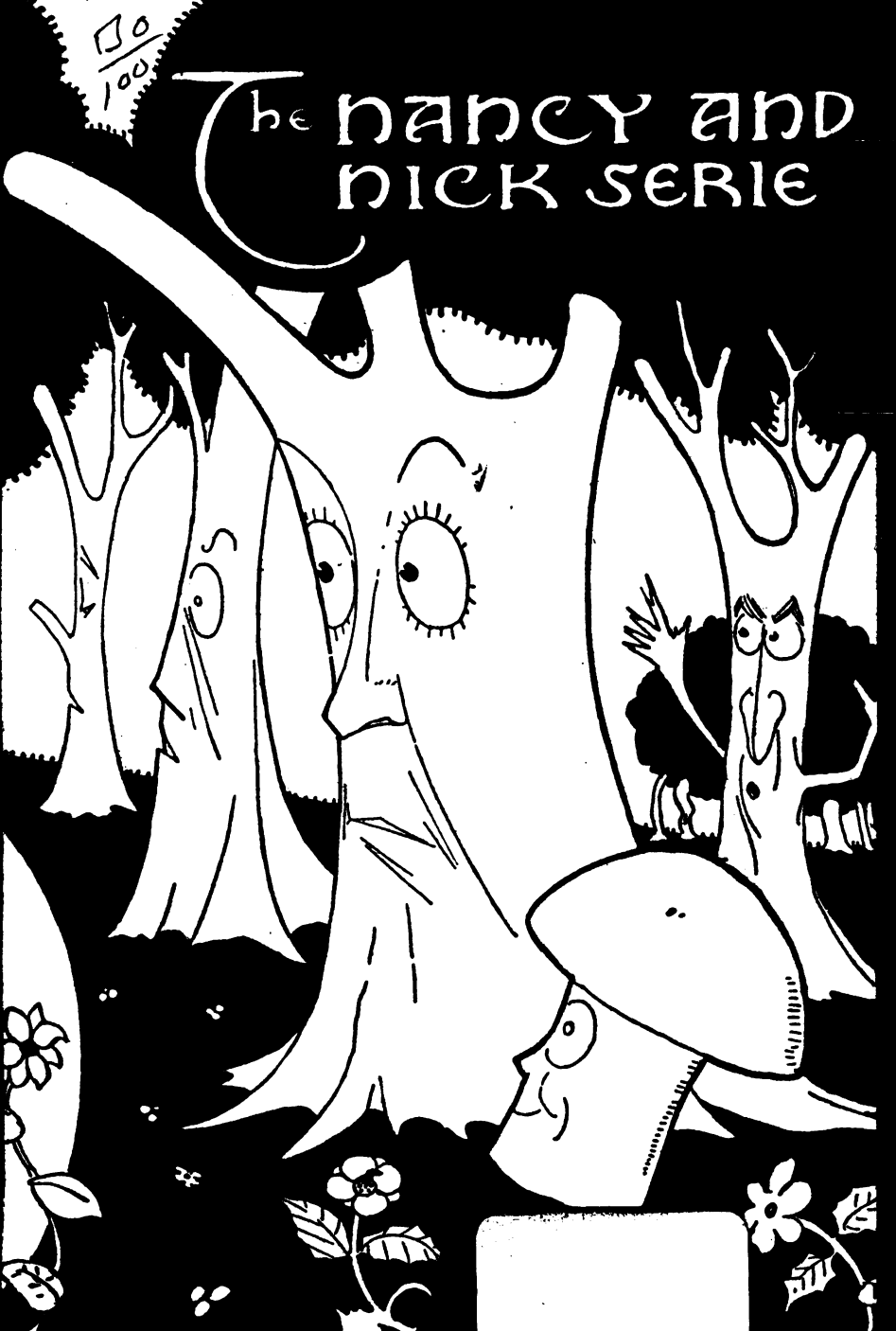
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